BV 4315 .H38 1920 v.4
Hastings, James, 1852-1922.
The children's great texts
of the Bible

THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS

Vol. I. GENESIS TO JOSHUA
„ II. JUDGES TO JOB
„ III. PSALMS TO ISAIAH
„ IV. JEREMIAH TO MATTHEW
„ V. MARK TO JOHN
„ VI. ACTS TO REVELATION

THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

EDITOR OF "THE EXPOSITORY TIMES" "THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE"
"THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"
AND OTHER WORKS

VOLUME IV

JEREMIAH to MATTHEW

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1921

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Speech of a Child (Jer. i. 6)	1
The Almond Tree (Jer. i. 11)	5
A Pair of Bellows (Jer. vi. 29)	9
Refuse Silver (Jer. vi. 30)	15
Why Sit Still? (Jer. viii. 14)	20
An Olive Tree (Jer. xi. 16)	24
The Diamond (Jer. xvii. 1)	29
The Marred Vessel (Jer. xviii. 4)	34
A Magic Hammer (Jer. xxiii. 29)	37
Copybooks (Jer. xxxvi. 18)	41
A Bundle of Rags (Jer. xxxviii. 11)	45
A Black Face (Lam. iv. 8)	51
Children of the North Wind (Ezek. i. 4)	55
The Sapphire (Ezek. i. 26)	59
Watchmen (Ezek. iii. 17; Ps. cxxvii. 1)	63
A Flame, a Fox, and an Envious Person (Ezek. xviii. 2)	67
Coral (Ezek. xxvii. 16)	71
The Agate (Ezek. xxvii. 16)	76
Old Iron (Ezek. xxvii. 19; Matt. vi. 19)	81
The Emerald (Ezek. xxviii. 13)	86
A Story of Courage (Dan. iii. 18)	91
Wish-bones or Back-bones? (Dan. vi. 3)	95
A Cake not Turned (Hos. vii. 8)	100
Smoke (Hos. xiii. 3)	104

PAGE

How to be Sorry (Joel ii. 13) 108
Hold your Tongue! (Amos vi. 10) . . . 112
A Basket of Summer Fruit (Amos viii. 1) . . 117
A Sieve (Amos ix. 9) 122
Who's to Blame? (Obad. 11) 126
Paying the Fare (Jon. i. 3) 131
False Weights (Mic. vi. 11) 135
Grow your Thorns in a Hedge (Mic. vii. 4) . . 141
Even a Worm will turn (the Earth) (Mic. vii. 17) . 145
Happy Feet (Hab. iii. 19) 150
The Right Kind of Bank (Hag. i. 6) . . . 154
Measuring Lines (Zech. ii. 1) 156
The Trifles that Count (Zech. iv. 10) . . . 161
The Right Kind of Nose (Mal. i. 13) . . . 166
Follow the Gleam (Matt. ii. 2) 171
The First Christmas Gift (Matt. ii. 11) . . 178
Nazareth (Matt. ii. 23) 183
Fighting the Dragon (Matt. iv. 1) . . . 189
The Merciful (Matt. v. 7) 193
The Peacemakers (Matt. v. 9) 200
A Pinch of Salt (Matt. v. 13; Mark ix. 50) . . 205
How to be a Lamp (Matt. v. 15) 209
The Second Mile (Matt. v. 41) 215
Heavenly Treasure (Matt. vi. 20) . . . 221
Two Masters (Matt. vi. 24) 226
Our Sisters the Birds (Matt. vi. 26) . . . 230
The Strait Gate (Matt. vii. 13) 234
Let him who Loves Me Follow Me (Matt. ix. 9) . 237
Matthew the Publican (Matt. x. 3) . . . 240
Serpents and Doves (Matt. x. 16) . . . 246
Secrets (Matt. x. 26) 251
Dearer than a Sparrow (Matt. x. 31) . . . 256
An Easy Yoke (Matt. xi. 29, 30) 260
Treasure Trove (Matt. xiii. 44) 264
The Pearl (Matt. xiii. 45) 269

PAGE
THE HEART OF A CHILD (Matt. xviii. 2; Mark ix. 36) . 274
GUARDIAN ANGELS (Matt. xviii. 10) . . . 279
THE UNGRATEFUL LABOURERS (Matt. xx. 11) . . 283
THE ASS THAT COULD NOT BE SPARED (Matt. xxi. 2) . 289
OUR NEIGHBOURS (Matt. xxii. 39) 295
WHAT IS YOUR TALENT? (Matt. xxv. 24) . . . 299
INASMUCH (Matt. xxv. 40) 304
EXCHANGES (Matt. xxvi. 15) 311
THE LANGUAGE OF THE KINGDOM (Matt. xxvi. 73) . 315
THE STORY OF A ROMAN LADY (Matt. xxvii. 19) . . 318
"LET BE" (Matt. xxvii. 49) 322

THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS.

THE SPEECH OF A CHILD.

I cannot speak: for I am a child.—Jer. i. 6.

THESE words were spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. God had called him to carry His message to the people of Judah, and Jeremiah felt he was not fit for the task. It was a very sad message he had to take. He had to tell his fellow-countrymen that unless they turned away from their wicked ways they would bring their country to ruin. It was a very terrible message, a very solemn one, and a very unpopular one, and Jeremiah felt quite unable to carry it. He loved his country dearly, and it hurt him dreadfully to have to foretell its doom. Besides, he was very young—little more than a lad. So when God asked him to go he replied, "I cannot speak: for I am a child."

Now I wonder if you have ever felt like Jeremiah? Not that you have a sad message to carry, but you want to do some good in the world, you want to help somebody, and you feel that you can do so little because you are just a child. So you say sadly, "I cannot

speak: for I am a child." Do you know that you are making a great mistake? A child can do a great deal more than he imagines—if only he is willing.

1. If you cannot speak you can *smile*, and a smile sometimes works miracles in driving away gloom, in dispersing the clouds of worry or even of angry and bitter thoughts that sometimes darken the minds of other people.

There was a man once who sat thinking black thoughts. He was planning to do a very wicked deed. His little child ran into the room. It was too wee even to speak, but it just toddled up to his chair, laid its chubby hands on his knees, and laughed up into his face. And the black thoughts vanished from the man's mind. They could not live beside that baby smile. He rose up a new man and he stayed a new man from that day forward.

2. And if you cannot speak you can *be*. What do we mean by that? Just by being a child, true and pure and good, you may work wonders in the world.

In one of the towns on the Continent they hold every year on the 28th of July a Feast of Cherries. On that day the town is thronged from morning to night with children dressed in white and waving branches of cherry trees, and when night falls they feast on the cherries which they have been carrying during the day. If you asked any of the inhabitants why that feast was held they would tell you this story.

In the year 1432 the town was laid siege to. The general commanding the besieging army demanded the instant surrender of the town and refused to make terms with the inhabitants. He would not even consent to sparing their lives should they surrender. For a week the people held out, but their provisions ran done and they were starving. Then one man had an idea. He suggested that all the children in the town between the ages of seven and fourteen should be dressed in white and sent into the tent of the general to plead for their own lives and the lives of the inhabitants. It was decided to carry out this plan, and there must have been many sad hearts among the fathers and mothers that night.

Next morning the gates of the city were opened and a long procession of children streamed out and made their way into the camp of the enemy. They found the general's tent and fell on their knees begging for mercy. Although the general was a fierce, cruel man he was so touched by their innocence and their courage, and so moved to compassion by their pale, pinched faces that he granted their request. Then he ordered food and fruit to be brought, and finally gave the command that each child should be presented with a cherry branch from the gardens near and sent back into the city to carry the good news.

So the children by their innocence and helplessness accomplished what the grown-ups could not do, and every year, as the anniversary of the brave deed returns, the town still keeps its Feast of Cherries.

3. Lastly, if you cannot speak you can *do*. To very few is given the gift of eloquence, but we can all speak by our lives. And, boys and girls, that is going to count much more than any gift of tongues. By a little deed of unselfishness here, by a little bit of self-denial there, by being loving and kind and thoughtful for others you can do much more than if you had "the tongues of men and of angels."

Do you know how God answered Jeremiah? He said, "Say not, I am a child: for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak." Then He touched the prophet's mouth as a sign that He had given him the gift of eloquence.

If you will let God touch your lives, then they will speak eloquently for Him, and all that they say will be beautiful and good.

THE ALMOND TREE.

A rod of an almond tree.—Jer. i. 11.

SOME of you are fond of making puns—too fond, your friends sometimes think, and they threaten to turn you out of the room if you make another. Did you know that there are puns in the Bible? There are—several of them—and our text to-day is one.

God was speaking to the young prophet Jeremiah and calling him to his life-work, and to encourage him in that work God said to the prophet, "What are you looking at just now?" "A branch of an almond tree," answered Jeremiah. Now it so happens that in Hebrew the almond tree is sometimes called the "hastener" or the "awakener" because, first of all the trees, it rushes into bloom. In January and February, when other trees are still asleep, it bursts into blossom, and the Hebrews look upon it as we do on our snowdrop. They think of it as the harbinger, the herald of the spring, and they call it by this poetic name, the "hastener," the tree that hastens to meet the spring. So, "A branch of the hastener," said Jeremiah, and God replied, "Right, Jeremiah, a branch of the *hastener*! So shall I *hasten* to do what I have promised."

The "hastener" is one of the most beautiful and

most prized trees in Palestine. We know almonds mostly as delicious white oblongs which we love to munch along with raisins, or as sweets coated with sugar; but the people of Palestine know the almond from its very beginning, and they eat the fruit at a much earlier stage than we do.

The almond tree is really a cousin of the peach and the apricot. Like the peach it bears its flowers before its leaves. These flowers are white at the tips but shade off to pale pink at the base of the petals, and an almond tree covered with blossoms is one of the glories of the land of Palestine. Immediately the flowers drop off the fruit begins to form and the leaves to appear; and by March the tree is green. The young fruit is enclosed in a downy green pod which is crisp like a cucumber and has a refreshing acid taste. During April and May it is sold in the streets, and the children, especially, love to buy it. After the fruit is ripe its green cover shrinks to a brown leathery envelope, the kernel hardens, and then you have the ripe almond, the almond that you see in the green-grocer's window. You pop it into boiling water, the brown covering slips off, and lo! the blanched almond we all delight in.

The Jews make sugar almonds as we do, and they also beat the kernels with sugar into a paste not unlike our marzipan or almond icing. You remember how Jacob told his sons to take with them into Egypt as a present to their unrecognized brother Joseph "a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and

almonds." They did not grow almonds in Egypt, so the present would be greatly appreciated. Of course Jacob's almonds would be plain, not sugared almonds, as there was no sugar in his day.

The almond is mentioned several times in the Bible. Aaron's miraculous rod that budded, blossomed, and yielded fruit all in one night was an almond branch. Perhaps it is in memory of this rod that the Jews still carry to their synagogues or churches, on festival days, branches of almond blossom. The flowers of the almond, too, were used as models for the ornaments of the seven-branched golden candlestick of the Tabernacle.

Now, you can forget all I have told you about the almond, if you promise to remember one thing—and that is its Hebrew name. It is as the "hastener" I want you to remember it, for it is as the "hastener" that it brings a message to us.

The almond hastens to respond to the sunshine and the call of spring. It meets them half-way. I want you to copy it. I want you, through life, to meet things and people half-way. I want you to be ready to respond. I want you to meet joy and gladness half-way. I want you to be keen and eager to greet all that is good or beautiful. I want you to be enthusiastic and not ashamed to show it.

You know there are some people in this world whom we describe as "wooden." And a very good description it is! There is no hastening blossom on their trees.

There is no answering smile on their faces when you smile to them. They might learn a lesson from the very dogs on the street. When one dog meets another it greets it by wagging its tail, and the second dog wags back a kindly answer. Don't be a "wooden" person. Copy the almond tree and give smile for smile, kindliness for kindliness, love for love.

And when you are hastening to respond to human love, don't forget to respond to God's love. It has come more than half-way to meet you. It has indeed been with you and around you from the day you came into the world. How are you going to meet it? Are you going to answer it? Are you going to return God's love with love?

A PAIR OF BELLOWS.

The bellows.—Jer. vi. 29.

OUR text to-day is a word used only once in the Bible, yet we all know it well, and many of us have in our homes the thing it stands for. Turn up the Book of Jeremiah, and in the sixth chapter at the very beginning of the twenty-ninth verse you will find our text—"the bellows."

Most of us, both little and grown-up, are fond of using bellows. There is a charm in turning the tiny peep of flame that flickers among the dead coal into a blaze that roars up the chimney. If the bellows have a squeak or a wheeze, as lots of them have, why, it's all the more sport! Then which of us has not longed to be a blacksmith when we stood in a smithy and watched the smith blow his fire? How the sparks flew! And how the black metal in the heart of the flames turned first red and then white under the blast of his mighty bellows!

Though bellows are mentioned only once in the Bible they are as old as the oldest part of the Bible itself, for we know that the Egyptians in the days of Moses used them. On the monuments of Egypt there are pictures showing the bellows of Moses' time. They

are not the least like our bellows; indeed, they seem very strange to our eyes, but there they are, and the men who blew them also! You see the fire in the middle of the picture, and on either side is a man busy at work. He seems to be standing on two fat leather air-cushions, a foot on each. In his right hand he has a string from the cushion under his right foot, and in his left hand he has a string from the cushion under his left foot; and he is pressing down the leather bag when it is full of air, and pulling it up by the string when it is empty; and both he and his friend on the other side of the fire look as if they had a stiff job. From the leather bags there are long pipes to carry the air to the fire, and in the picture you see a third man holding something like a bent iron rod in the flames. Perhaps he is just poking the fire to help his two friends, or perhaps he is working on the rod. Poor fellows! you feel sorry they lived in the days when blowing bellows seemed such hard work.

Now, a pair of bellows is a thing we may use only once a week or so when a fire refuses to burn; but the smith we were speaking of a moment ago will tell you that he could not do his work at all without the aid of bellows. The bellows make his fire sufficiently hot to soften the metal and prepare it for the anvil. They are an absolute necessity if he is to do his work properly.

And I think, boys and girls, that we, too, need bellows if we are to do successfully our work in the

world. If we are to make the best of our lives we need something to urge us on. Our life is like the smith's fire—if we want it to be more than just a dull, useless smoulder we shall have to use some sort of bellows.

There are many bellows which we may use to make our fire of life burn brightly, but I want to speak of the three greatest to-day, and we shall take them in the order of good, better, best. If you go to history and study the lives of the men who have left their mark on the world, you will find that they used one or more of the three.

1. The first bellows is called *ambition*. It is a grand ornamental article with a fine brass nozzle. Its wood is highly polished, its leather is a gorgeous crimson, and its edges are studded with glittering brass nails. Everybody should use the bellows of ambition. We don't give much for the boy or girl who is content to sit at the foot of the class, and to have twelve errors in dictation every other day. No, the boy or girl we admire is the one who aims to sit at the top of the class even though he or she may not be brilliant. Aim at the top! If you don't reach it you will get to the middle at least. Ambition will help you to do what without it would be impossible. It will make the fire of your life glow bright, and shine far.

But remember, please remember, that ambition, though it looks so fine, is a dangerous instrument if

you use it too much. The blaze you make may prove so hot and fierce that it will burn up and destroy other people's property. Remember that others too have a right to the first place. Don't let the ambition to be great make you hard and selfish and cruel. Don't be so busy blowing your bellows and working for success that you have neither time nor wish to help those about you. Ambition was the bellows of Napoleon, as it has been that of many another conqueror. But we know where it brought Napoleon in the end of the day—so beware!

2. Our second bellows is called *duty*. Its wooden sides are unpolished, and its drab-coloured leather is nailed on with iron nails. It is large and powerful, but it is very stiff to blow and it creaks a good deal at times. Although it looks so uninteresting it makes a better fire than the bellows of ambition. It blows not for itself but for other people. The fire it stirs up may not shine so far, but it is hotter at the heart and warms those around it.

The bellows of duty has one remarkable thing about it. It is always at hand. No matter where you turn, it is always at your elbow. You don't need to go looking for it. It seems rather to be always looking for you, and trying to say, "Here am I! Use me, use me!" And, boys and girls, we are wise if we do use that uninteresting-looking bellows, for we shall not lack our reward.

Duty was the grim bellows of grand old Oliver

Cromwell. It has been the bellows of most reformers, and it has done noble work. But I can tell you of a more powerful instrument still; and that brings us to the third bellows—the finest of all.

3. What is the third bellows? Well, it calls itself *love*. It is made of wood exquisitely carved, its leather is delicate cream, and its nails are pure gold. It does not look so showy as the bellows of ambition, nor so strong as the bellows of duty, but try it! It blows so gently that it does not extinguish even the tiniest spark, and yet it blows so strongly that the fire is soon at white heat.

But the marvellous thing about it is that it is so easy to blow. It takes only half or quarter as much labour as is needed with the other two; it does its work twice as quickly. Why is this? It gives away the secret in its very name. It does its work easily because it loves it, and it does its work well for the same reason. If we use the bellows of love we shall do life's tasks not because we want to be first, nor yet because we ought, but because we love them. That makes work easy, and duty light, and life truly happy and successful.

Love has been the bellows of men greater than Napoleon or Oliver Cromwell. Love inspired the greatest Man of all, the Man who was not only man but God. It was love that sent Christ into the world. It was love that led Him to die for us. It is only love

that will make us live such lives as He would have us live.

So, boys and girls, choose your bellows. Use them each in turn, use them well and often, but don't forget to use oftenest of all the wonderful bellows of love.

REFUSE SILVER.

Refuse silver.—Jer. vi. 30.

"REFUSE silver!" What did the prophet Jeremiah mean by "refuse silver"? And why did he tell the people of Judah that they were like refuse silver.

As many of you know, silver is rarely found as pure silver. It is oftener found mixed with other metals such as copper or platinum, and before it can be made use of it has to be separated from these. The alloy, as the mixture is called, has to be refined or purified. Nowadays there are several ways in which this can be done, but in Jeremiah's day there was only one, and it is to it that he refers when he speaks of "refuse silver." In the prophet's time the alloy was mixed with lead and the whole was melted in a furnace. Then a current of air was passed over the molten mixture. This caused the lead to combine with the impurities. It carried them away and the pure silver only was left.

Now Jeremiah pictured himself as a refiner of silver trying to refine or purify the nation. He was continually giving the Jews warnings and messages from God telling them to repent of their wicked ways, pleading with them to give up their naughtiness, their

impurities. He was heating the fire, he was blowing the bellows. He was doing his best to make the people turn to God, but in vain. They were like silver that refused to be purified. They would not separate themselves from their sin. They would not give up their wickedness. And so, Jeremiah told them, they were like "refuse (or "impure") silver."

It is a far cry from the days of Jeremiah, but I think there are still plenty of grown-up people who are like refuse silver. They remain wicked because they want to be wicked. And there are lots of *little* people who are uncommonly like refuse silver too. They won't be good because they prefer to be naughty.

Now, I am rather sorry for those who won't be good because they prefer to be naughty. You see, they are making such a huge mistake. Perhaps they are mixing up goodness and "goody-goodness"—which are two very different things. Perhaps they are just determined to have their own way whether it be bad or good. Perhaps they are like the troublesome small boy whose mother said to him, "Johnnie, I don't believe you know what it is to be good!" "Yes, I do!" promptly replied Johnnie. "It's not doing what you want to do." Perhaps they are what Scotch people call "contrairy." When someone wants them to do a certain thing they immediately want to do the very opposite. Whatever their reason may be, they

are acting very foolishly. And if there are any of them here to-day I want to tell them three things.

1. The first is that *goodness means happiness.*—Did you ever try to swim up-stream or against a strong current? That is what you are trying to do when you are persistently naughty. You are going against God and against good. And going against God and against good never brought anyone happiness yet. It may bring you at the moment a kind of excitement which you mistake for happiness; but nobody who goes on deliberately doing evil is ever really happy. God made man to be good, and that is why. The better man is the happier he will be. Goodness and happiness are like the parallel lines of a railroad track. They are found always side by side.

2. Then *goodness means usefulness.*—It is only if you are doing right, it is only if you are pure and good, that you will be of value to the world. Refuse silver is worthless, and so are deliberately naughty people. Have you ever tried to work a sewing-machine? Have you ever tried to work it backwards? You know that the wheel will turn backwards as well as forwards. You can reverse it quite easily. Yes, but it won't do any sewing; it will merely tangle the thread. Those who prefer naughtiness to goodness are working their machine of life backwards. They are succeeding only in making a failure.

3. In the last place, *goodness means strength.*—It does *not* mean weakness, as some people would make you believe. These people are probably thinking of "goody-goodness," which, as we said already, is quite another thing. Goodness — genuine goodness and purity—is a power so great that there is nothing it may not accomplish.

They tell a story of the church in the quaint little town of Mont St. Michel on the coast of Normandy. The town is built, as you may have read in the geography books, on a rock. The story goes that a certain good man called Aubert was bidden in a dream to build on the rock a church to God. He and his fellow-labourers set to work to prepare a foundation, but it was hard labour, for the rock was steep and difficult. At last they succeeded, except for one huge boulder which was so enormous that none of their pulleys or contrivances could move it out of the way.

Then Aubert had a dream, and in his dream he was told to send for the sons of a certain peasant, and they would move the stone. He did this, and twelve strong men came at his bidding. They pushed and pulled, but still the rock would not move. Aubert was puzzled, but he bethought him that there might be still another son, so he asked the men if they had yet a brother. They replied that they had, but he was only a child. Aubert desired that he too should be brought, and the story tells that when the child set his hand against the rock the whole mass crashed

down to the foot of the mount—where it lies to this day.

Boys and girls, that is more a legend than real history, but there is a lesson in it for you and me. It reminds us that goodness—the goodness of purity and innocence—is not weak, but is one of the strongest things in the world.

WHY SIT STILL?

Why do we sit still?—Jer. viii. 14.

PERHAPS you think this is a funny sort of text, and that it isn't a bit suitable for boys and girls. There is a question you are much more accustomed to hear, especially if you are very small, "Why do you *not* sit still?" You have been asked to be quiet for a short time while mother tussles with her weekly bills, or father writes a business letter, or big brother works out a difficult sum, and you do try very hard for a minute. But something tickly seems to come in your legs, and before you know it you are fidgeting about on your chair or bobbing on and off it, until the grown-up person says in a rather annoyed tone, "Can you not keep still for five minutes?" Well, of course you can't. Moving about is just part of the way you grow, and you can no more help moving than you can help growing. The best thing to do is to get something quiet to do, something that won't disturb the big people—a story-book to look at, or a dolly to dress, or a puzzle to puzzle out, and then the fidgeting and the bobbing will stop without your knowing it.

And yet I think boys and girls, yes, and grown-ups too, need very much to ask themselves this question,

"Why do we sit still?" Because very often we sit still when we should be jumping up and getting busy.

1. Sometimes we sit still when there is somebody to help, and that is not a good sort of sitting still. The other day I travelled in a tramcar with two well-dressed little girls of ten and twelve. It was a busy hour, and the car filled rapidly. By degrees most of us who were young and strong had given up our seats to older people, but these two little girls sat still. At last there entered a sweet, frail old lady with silvery hair and cheeks like a rosy apple, *and the little girls still sat still.* And a quite middle-aged woman with a tired face rose and gave the old lady her seat.

Now I expect these children weren't really selfish or unkind: they just didn't think. But I want you to take trouble to think. Get into the way of looking out for the good turns you can do. You would be surprised how many there are if you just watch for them. Don't sit still if there is an errand to run, or a door to open, or a bundle to carry, or somebody to help out of a difficulty.

There is a fine story told of the Prince of Wales when he was in France with the King a few months after the War began. King George had been reviewing troops at various points, and the Prince had accompanied him wherever he went. One day the King had been distributing decorations to the troops at some distance from General Headquarters. The

day was very wet, and before the royal party got back night had fallen.

On the return journey a slight accident befell the Prince's car, but it was able to proceed slowly. By and by it passed a lonely soldier trudging along in the rain without either cap or coat. The Prince at once stopped the car and questioned the man. When he found that the poor fellow had been left behind by a supply train he not only insisted on taking him back to Headquarters in his car, but he gave him his own coat to wear. It is just these little thoughtful kindnesses that have made our Prince so much beloved.

"Tom," said a father to his lazy son, "did you ever see a snail?" "Yes, father," said Tom. "Ah, then you must have *met* it, for you could never have overtaken it!" And I'm afraid some of us are slower than snails when there is some little helpful kindness waiting for us to do.

2. But there is another bad way in which we sometimes sit still, and that is in not interfering to prevent wrong or injustice. You would not go the length of tormenting a kitten, or hitting a fellow smaller than yourself, or spreading a nasty story about somebody. But do you try to rescue the kitten the other boy is tormenting, or stand up to the bully who is fighting that little chap, do you refuse to listen to an unkind tale? Sometimes we can do as much harm just by sitting still and looking on as by actually doing the hurt.

And, boys and girls, the world is full of wrongs that

are waiting to be righted just because people are too selfish, or too lazy, or too comfortable to trouble themselves to rise and right them. Some of these wrongs are waiting for you to deal with. Will you just sit still and let them be, or will you resolve, with God's help, to do your little part to put them right?

AN OLIVE TREE.

A green olive tree, fair with goodly fruit.—Jer. xi. 16.

You have all seen a part or parts of to-day's text, but I doubt if any of you have seen the whole of it. You won't find it in this country. It will not grow here because the climate is too cold. It grows, however, not so very far away, for you will find it in millions on the coasts of the Mediterranean and in Italy. You will find it also in the Holy Land. I expect the part of it which most of you know is its oil. You may have eaten it in salad, or had it rubbed on your chest by mother when you had a cold. Some of you may have eaten its berries, not as dessert like other fruit, but as a relish before a dinner-party. They looked like oval-shaped pods of sea-weed, their taste was strange, and I doubt if you enjoyed them very much.

Have you guessed our text? You will find it mentioned in ever so many of the books of the Bible, for it is one of its commonest and most famous trees; but the mention of it which we are taking as to-day's text is in the Book of Jeremiah, the eleventh chapter, and the sixteenth verse—"A green olive tree, fair with goodly fruit."

The Bible first mentions the olive when it tells us

that the dove brought Noah an olive leaf to the ark. That leaf showed Noah that at last the Deluge was over, and the waters were abating. We read of the olive in connection with Solomon's beautiful Temple, the doors and posts of which were made of olive wood, as were also its great winged angels called "cherubim." The oil which is crushed from the olive berries was used by the priests as anointing oil, and it was also burned in the Temple lamps.

Then, when we come to the time of Christ, we find the olive tree associated with Him. We often read of His being on the Mount of Olives. We know that He spent there many a night in prayer, and that it was from that mountain-side that He ascended into Heaven. There were olive trees, too—there are some still—in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Christ spent some of His last sad hours on earth.

What is an olive tree like? It is a large spreading tree with a gnarled, twisted trunk. Its leaves are lance-shaped. Their upper side is of the shade we call olive green, and their under side has a sheen like silver. Its berries are small and dark and oval-shaped, as we have already noticed. There are four things I want you to remember about the olive tree. Four is a large number, but I think you can manage to remember them all if you try hard.

1. The first is its *greenness.* It is what we call an evergreen. Autumn does not fade its leaves, nor does winter take them away. That is like the life of those

who love Jesus. They never really grow old, and they never die. Their life is ever fresh and never-ending. They do not die when the winter of death arrives; they merely waken to a fairer spring in Heaven.

2. The second thing I want you to remember about the olive tree is *its fruitfulness.*

It is not content to be merely a beautiful evergreen, it is busy growing fruit. Now, very few evergreens grow fruit, as you know. Of course we have holly berries, and cotoneaster berries, and a few more; but who would think of eating these? But the olive tree bears so many berries that as much as ten or fifteen gallons of oil can be crushed out of the fruit of one tree. The strange thing is that the soil in which the olive grows best is not the sort of soil you would expect to grow a rich crop of oily fruit. It is hard and flinty, but the olive pushes its roots down between the crevices of the flinty rock, and from the cold, unpromising stone it draws the nourishment for its precious crop.

Boys and girls, let us imitate the olive. We too can bear fruit. We can grow loving thoughts and gentle words and noble deeds. And if life sometimes seems as hard as the flinty rock, there is no reason why we should bruise ourselves against it. Why not be like the wise olive and out of its hardness draw rich fruits?

3. The third thing I want you to remember is its *usefulness.*

The olive tree is not only evergreen and busy, it is usefully busy. The uses of the tree are so many that I believe you would require the fingers of both hands to count them. Try it. Check them off as I name them. (1) Its berries are used for food by the peasant of the Holy Land. They, along with the thin loaves of Palestine, are what he chiefly lives on. They are his butter and jam combined. (2) The oil pressed out of these berries is used for burning in lamps. (3) It is also used for cooking. (4) It forms part of something of which some of you are not too fond, but which none of us could do without—I mean soap. Olive oil soap is one of the best soaps made. (5) Its wood, which is hard and beautifully marked, is used by cabinetmakers to make pieces of furniture.

That is one hand. Now for the other. (6) Its roots are excellent for burning in the fire. (7) So are the crushed stones of its berries. (8) From its bark is made a tonic medicine, and (9) a gum used as a perfume. (10) Its leaves form a grateful shade from the burning sun. Under the olive trees—especially in Italy, where they are grown in terraces—you will find crops flourishing. That is not the usual way, is it? If we sowed our crops in a wood they would never come to anything. But the foliage of the olive tree is not too dense. It helps instead of hindering the growth of the corn.

You see the olive's busy-ness is a good busy-ness. It is an unselfish busy-ness—a busy-ness for others. And that is the sort of busy-ness we should try to grow.

4. The fourth and last thing I should like you to remember about the olive is that *it requires grafting* to make it produce fine fruit.

The wild olive has fruit, but it is bitter, it gives little oil; and the wood of the tree is of no use except for burning. How is the wild olive made into a good tree? A branch from a good olive is grafted into it. That is all.

You know what grafting means, don't you? Perhaps you have noticed apple trees with funny-looking lumps of clay sticking to their branches. Underneath the lumps of clay there is a join in the branch. The gardener has fitted a cultivated branch on to a wild trunk. By and by the two grow together and become one, and the fruit is no longer wild but good.

Boys and girls, it is the same with us. We can never bear fine fruit until Christ has been grafted into us, until we give Him a place in our heart. Then His influence will do for us what the cultivated branch does to the wild olive trunk. It will make our fruit good.

THE DIAMOND.

A diamond.—Jer. xvii. 1.

APRIL has as its stone the diamond. Everybody knows a diamond. It is the most brilliant of precious stones. And yet it is only a variety of what is known as carbon. The black stuff (wrongly called lead) which forms the point of your pencil and the shiny lumps of coal which burn in the grate are made of the same substance. They are the diamond's first cousins. More remarkable still, a diamond, by means of great heat or electricity, can be turned into a black mass like coal dust, and coal dust, most wonderful of all, can actually be turned into small diamonds—very small, it is true, but still diamonds. Some day we may learn how to make diamonds as large and as cheap as cocoa-nuts, and then everybody who wishes can have one.

But though men of science have succeeded in making diamonds, they have not discovered how the diamond makes itself. That remains a mystery. The diamond is found in river-beds, sand, and gravel, in India, Brazil, and Borneo; but in the great diamond-mining country, South Africa, it is found in what is known as "blue ground." This greenish-blue earth is met with in deep craters known as "pipes." But

instead of being hollow the pipes are packed with hard blue earth. Some men say that it was volcanic action that made the diamonds in the blue ground, but nobody is quite sure. All that is certain is that the diamonds are embedded there, each a separate crystal, some large, some medium-sized, many very tiny, but all costly and precious in the sight of man.

How did the diamond get its name? Diamond is really the same word as "adamant," and "adamant" means "that which cannot be tamed or broken." It is a good name for a stone which is the hardest thing in the world. The diamond is so hard that it can cut glass, steel, or precious stones. The painter uses it to cut the panes for our windows, and the dentist uses it for one of his delightful drills.

There are many famous diamonds in existence. All the large ones have names, and their history is known like the history of the kings or great men who have owned them. Perhaps the two most famous are the Koh-i-noor and the Cullinan.

The Koh-i-noor, or "mountain of light," belonged to the ancient rulers of India, the Moguls. A Persian conqueror, Nadir Shah, conquered Hindustan, and took away as part of the spoil this glittering gem. But he did not keep it very long. He was killed shortly after, and his treasurer, an Afghan, carried it back to Cabul, where he made himself emperor. It passed from one prince to another, and it almost seemed as if the sovereignty of India went with it. In 1850 it fell into

the hands of the East India Company, who presented it to Queen Victoria. It now flashes in the crown of the Queens of England. Long may it rest there!

The other great diamond, three times as large as any other diamond, the Cullinan, was found in the Premier Mine in the Transvaal in 1905. At the suggestion of General Botha, the Transvaal presented it to King Edward in gratitude for his having granted self-government to that State. It was cut into nine large stones and many small ones. The two largest are the biggest diamonds known. Of these the smaller is set in front of the British Crown. The Cullinan, you see, has a short history, but a happy one.

Now, what has the diamond to say to us? You will notice that it is valued because it cuts, but it is prized most because it shines. It catches the light, breaks it up into all the colours of the rainbow, and flashes it back to us glorified and magnified. So I think the diamond's message is this—"Shine."

When I say "shine" I don't mean that I want you to try to be one of the brilliant people in the world—one of those who are always making clever sparkling remarks, or writing wonderful books, or doing great things in business. Brilliant people of that type are few, and not many of us can aspire to shine in that way.

No, there is another, and to my mind a better, way to shine, and we can all try it. It is a very simple way. We have merely to be happy. Perhaps some

people will say, "That may sound simple, but it isn't simple when you come to try it." Now these people are wrong. It is perfectly simple if you only follow the directions I am going to give you.

There was once an old Spaniard who was very fond of cherries. He was so fond of them that when he sat down to eat them he put on a pair of magnifying spectacles which made them look twice as big. That sounds greedy, but his idea was not at all a bad one, and I think we might imitate it.

Let us keep two sets of imaginary spectacles, one pair to make things twice their size, and the other to make things half their size. Let us put on the first pair to look at all the joys and pleasures in life, and let us keep the second pair to look at all the troubles and the worries.

Or, to put it another way, like the diamond let us catch and reflect all the sunbeams that are going. When you were very tiny I expect you often tried to catch a sunbeam with your fat little hands—and failed. The diamond's way of catching them is the only way.

If we always try to look at the bright side of things and catch all the sunbeams, do you know what will happen? Why, our faces will shine with the happiness we have caught. And a happy shining face is ten times more to be desired than a face with merely beautiful features. The loveliest face is ugly with a frown or a cross expression, and the plainest face is beautiful if love and happiness shine out of its eyes.

Shall I give you a reason why we should shine? We should shine because Christ expects us to do it. It is our duty as His children. He is our great Sun and we are His diamonds. He pours on us the sunshine of His love. He cares for us each one, and we know that He will not let anything harm us. And we love Him in return, and, knowing all is well, flash back His sunshine and take as our motto—"I shine for Christ."[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Gen. ii. 12; Job xxviii. 19; Prov. iii. 15; Ezek. i. 26, xxvii. 16 (2), xxviii. 13; Matt. xiii. 45; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

THE MARRED VESSEL.

When the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel.—Jer. xviii. 4.

I WONDER how many of you have watched a potter at work with his wheel? The moulding of cups and vases is a most fascinating process, and if you ever have the opportunity of seeing it you should not miss doing so.

One very interesting thing about the manufacture of pottery is that the methods are practically the same as they were in the days of Jeremiah. We have introduced all sorts of wonderful and complicated machinery for weaving, for making tools and weapons, for working on the land; but the potter's wheel remains very much what it was thousands of years ago.

In Jeremiah's day the machine on which pottery was made consisted of two horizontal wheels, joined by an axle. The lower wheel was moved by the foot and caused the upper one to rotate. On to this upper wheel the potter threw his lump of clay which had been previously prepared by being kneaded into the right consistency and having all impurities—such as stones or bits of grit—removed. The potter then set

his wheel agoing, and while it rotated he moulded the clay into the desired shape.

First he formed it into a cone very much like a sugar-loaf. Then he thrust his left thumb into the top of the cone and kept pushing until he had made a hole large enough to admit his whole hand. In the meantime he kept on moulding the outside of the vessel with his right hand, or with a piece of wood held in that hand, until he had formed it according to the plan in his mind.

Now God sent Jeremiah to watch a potter at work because He wanted to give him a special message. And whilst the prophet watched this particular potter something happened. The vessel was almost complete; it was just taking on a most beautiful form when suddenly the wheel stopped. A stone or a bit of grit in the clay had spoiled the shape of the vase. Jeremiah watched to see what the workman would do. Would he throw away the vessel and begin on a new bit of clay? No, he took the spoiled vase, crushed it down, and began all over again. It was not such a beautiful vessel as the first one might have been, but still it was good and useful.

And the message God gave Jeremiah was that as the potter had done with the clay so He could do with the people of Israel. He had had a great purpose for them. He had meant that they should be a great and good nation, and by their wilfulness and wickedness they had spoiled His plan. But if they would yet give themselves into His hands to do as He would with

them, to mould them to His will, He could still make of them something noble and useful.

Now, boys and girls, what has this to do with you and me? A very great deal. God has a plan for each of us and He wants to mould each into a beautiful useful vessel. If we will yield ourselves into His hands He can make of us something very good and very noble. The trouble is that many of us won't give ourselves into God's hands. We won't trust Him, we prefer our own way. And so the grit of self-will, the grit of foolishness and sin gets in and spoils the noble vessel.

And, boys and girls, the message to the grown-ups to-day is that God is still able to make something worth while, something good and useful of their marred vessels, if they will let Him. But the message to you is don't let the grits get in.

You have the glorious privilege of the first chance, the privilege of the unmarred vessel, the chance to become something very beautiful, very splendid. You are still a lump of plastic clay. Won't you give yourselves wholly into God's hands to be moulded and perfected? You will never regret it.

A MAGIC HAMMER.

A hammer.—Jer. xxiii. 29.

HAVE you ever heard of the great god Thor, whom the Scandinavians worshipped centuries ago, before they heard of the true God? Whether you know of him or not, you mention his name at least once a week when Thursday comes round. For Thursday is just Thor's day, and it was so called in honour of him. He was one of the greatest of the old Scandinavian gods, and he was tremendously strong. He had three wonderful possessions — a belt which doubled his strength when he girt it round him, a pair of iron gloves, and a hammer which no mortal could lift. With it he fought and slew the giants who were the enemies of the gods.

One day Thor awoke from sleep to find his hammer gone. A giant named Thrym had managed to steal it, and had hidden it eight miles below the earth. There was great consternation among the gods when they heard of the loss, for they were helpless without Thor's hammer to defend them. So they sent a messenger to Thrym, but he refused to return the hammer unless the gods gave him the goddess Freya as his wife. But the goddess Freya was very angry at the suggestion and

would not go. Then they hit upon a plan. Thor borrowed Freya's dress and veil, and, disguised as a bride, entered the hold of the giant. Now, it happened that Thor's hammer was supposed to make any promise sworn over it sacred and binding, so Thrym the giant produced the hammer when he was going to marry his bride. And the moment the hammer was brought within Thor's reach he seized it and slew the wicked giant. And the gods were safe and happy once more.

Thor would never have recovered his magic hammer had he not possessed another invisible hammer even more magical, and it is of this invisible hammer I want to speak to you to-day. This invisible hammer is not Thor's property only. Each of us has one. With some of us it is a powerful weapon, with others it is a poor, weak tool. We don't call it a hammer, however; we spell it with four letters, the first of which is a "w" and the last an "l." Can you guess the name of our invisible hammer? I think some of you have got it. Yes, our hammer is our *will*. Thor would never have got back his mighty hammer unless he had used his will and determined to recover it. And so we must use our invisible hammer too. God gave it us to use. He wants us to use it. And the more we use it the mightier it will grow.

"Ah!" you say, "but there are no giants now for our hammer to slay!" Are there not? What about Giant Despair. He is a grim old horror who is always

ready to steal up to you and whisper in your ear, "What's the use of trying? That sum is far too stiff. You'll never get it right. Give it up." Or, "What's the good of attempting to write that essay? You simply can't do it." Or, "You needn't think of trying to reach the top of your class. There are too many clever boys or girls above you." Or, worse still, "What's the use of trying to do the right thing and the straight thing against such odds? Nobody cares. You'll be beaten in the end, so you'd best yield soon rather than late." Boys and girls, don't believe Despair. He's a hateful old liar. Take up your magic hammer and knock him out at a blow. He can't stand up to "I will."

Then there's Giant Laziness. He is generally lurking not far off with a lot of ready-made excuses, and when you find yourself saying, "I haven't time for that; I can't be bothered doing it," or, "It's too much of a fag!" you are merely echoing the words he has suggested to you. Up and at him, boys and girls! Let him feel the force of your hammer. He runs at the sound of a hearty "I will."

So much for using our magic hammer! Now, I want to give you a word of warning. It is grand to use it well, but it is fearful to use it wrongly. Almost every day you hear someone say, "It is no use arguing with So-and-so. He has such a strong will, he won't listen to reason, and he'll have his own way in spite of everybody." That kind of strong will is a strong will

run mad. If you have a will like that, you are not master of it, but it is master of you. You have allowed your hammer to get the upper hand. Instead of using it to slay your enemies you are letting it rain heavy blows on yourself. You are allowing it to hammer out of you all obedience, all duty, all gentleness, all common sense. If your hammer is getting like that, seize hold of it firmly to-day, and refuse to let it rule you any longer.

No, let us use our hammer as God meant us to use it—well and wisely. So used, it will do for us even more wonderful things than did Thor's hammer for him in the imaginary days of old.

COPYBOOKS.

I wrote them with ink in the book.—Jer. xxxvi. 18.

I WONDER how many of you remember the first time you wrote with ink? Perhaps it was a very long time ago, but you still recollect something about it. Do you remember how proud you were when you were given a pen and were allowed to use it? Before that you were only permitted to write in pencil, and that was very dull and uninteresting, but now you had a pen and an inkpot all to yourself and a copybook to write in! It was a great occasion!

You began so proudly and so hopefully, but by and by mistakes crept in. A wrong letter was written, a blot fell here and there out of a too full pen, little inky fingers left ugly smudges. And perhaps, because you were very small, a few salt tears fell on the page. But the worst of it all was that the mistakes wouldn't come out. When you wrote in pencil or on a slate it was easy to remove the errors, but when you wrote in ink it was a different matter!

Now life is just like a great big copybook, and every day we are writing a page in that book. Each action and word and thought writes something on the page. And what we write we can't take out again, for

we are writing in ink, not in pencil. Sometimes our page is clean and tidy and well-written, sometimes it is ugly and smudged and spoiled; but no matter what it is like, we can't alter it.

Well, I want you to remember three things about this copybook we are writing.

1. *Do your very best with the page you have.*—Sometimes, you know, you begin a new page in your copybook very well. The first line is neat and even, and as like the head line as it could possibly be. But when you get down the page a bit you become more careless. Perhaps you grow tired writing the same words over and over again, perhaps you forget to look at the top line. Some of the letters jump off the line, others won't stand up straight, some are too fat and others are too lean, some are too tall and others too short. And when you come to the last line of all it is a sad failure. Well of course the best way is to keep on writing well to the bottom of the page. That is difficult, but you can do it if you try hard.

Now it is just the same with life's copybook. Sometimes we rise in the morning feeling very bright and fit, and we mean to do well and have a splendid day. But little by little the mistakes creep in. Perhaps we lose our temper over some trifle; perhaps we do something mean, or say something unkind. And soon our page is all blotted and ugly, our day is all spoiled.

And yet, just as it is with the pages of our copybook, so it is with the pages of our life. If we try very hard,

and if we ask God to help us to try, we can keep out a lot of the mistakes.

2. *Let God put right your mistakes.*—Once, when you were very little, you spoiled a page in your copybook. You tried your best, but everything went wrong and your little head ached and the tears were very near. Then mother came and took the book from you. And she cleaned it up in a wonderful way—a way you couldn't manage. And somehow when she came to you everything seemed right again. Your head stopped aching and your troubles were at an end.

And God is just like mother. He can put right the things we spoil. He can wash out all our mistakes. *You* can't alter them but *He* can. And I want you to remember that—not only now, but long, long after this, when you are grown men and women. Will you always take your spoiled pages to God? He wants to put them right. And the biggest mistake people ever make—the only mistake that really counts—is when they forget to take their spoiled pages to Him.

3. *Never forget that there is always a new page.*—Some people forget to turn the new page, and when the new day comes they copy the old one over again with all its mistakes and ugly blots. And so they never get out of the bit.

If you have made a mess of the page that is just turned, you can make a fresh start with the new one and make this fresh one all the more beautiful. It is

the best thing you can do, and God gives you the new page to let you have another chance.

So we must go on trying till we reach the very last page of all. Then when our work is done God will take away our copybook and give us another, fresh and unspoiled, in which we shall make no mistakes.

A BUNDLE OF RAGS.

Old cast clouts and old rotten rags.—Jer. xxxviii. 11.

THIS is a queer text, is it not ?—what you might call a good-for-nothing text. Well, let us see if we can't find some good even in a bundle of rags.

Do you know the story—the story of how Jeremiah escaped from the dungeon ? It reads like a chapter in a book of adventure. God makes use of strange people and strange things to serve Him. When He wanted to help Peter to escape from prison He sent an angel to open the doors, but when He wished to rescue Jeremiah He used a black slave and a few old rags. But now for our story.

Jeremiah had displeased the princes of Judah: they did not like his message. So they went to Zedekiah the king and demanded that he should put the prophet to death. Zedekiah was a weak man, but he did not want to put Jeremiah to death, so he gave him up to the princes to do as they would with him.

Now the princes were afraid to kill Jeremiah outright because he was the prophet of God, but they hit upon a much more cruel plan, a plan by which Jeremiah would die slowly but surely. In the court

of the guard was a pit or cistern where water was sometimes stored. It was deep, and the entrance was narrow. At that time there was no water in the pit, but the bottom was covered with soft, oozy mud. It would make a splendid dungeon, and there was no hope of escape from it. So they lowered Jeremiah into the cistern and left him to die a slow death from starvation and suffocation.

But help came from an unexpected quarter. Attached to the king's household was a black slave called Ebed-melech, a name which just means "the king's slave." He was little thought of at court, nevertheless he was a brave man and a faithful friend. Perhaps Jeremiah had been kind to him when everybody else despised him. At any rate he was true to the prophet when other friends deserted him.

Now news came to Ebed-melech of all that the princes had done to Jeremiah, and he went straight to Zedekiah the king and told him all that had happened. The king was really fond of Jeremiah, and when Ebed-melech begged permission to rescue the prophet, he not only gave it but bade him take some men with him to help in the rescue. And now we come to the rags.

Ebed-melech remembered how thin and weak Jeremiah would be after his long fast, so he went first to the royal lumber-room which lay just under the king's treasury, and from thence he took a bundle of rags—bits of old garments that had been worn out and cast aside. Then he hurried to the cistern in the

courtyard and lowered the rags into the cistern by means of a rope. He told Jeremiah to slip the rope under his arms and to put a padding of rags between the rope and his armpits so that the cord might not chafe and cut him. Jeremiah obeyed, and then, with a long pull and a strong all together, he was drawn up again into the light of day and the sweet, pure air.

That is the story. But I did not mean to make a sermon about the story. I wanted the rags to speak for themselves, so I must let them get a word in edgeways.

1. Well, I think they tell us first that *nothing is "good for nothing."* Everything is of use in the world.

I daresay those rags in the king's lumber-room often lamented the day when they formed part of a royal robe. "Alack, alas!" they would sigh, "what good are we to anyone now, rotting out our existence in this musty, dark old hole?" And yet God had a purpose even for those rags, and never in all the days of their grandeur were they put to such glorious use as when they helped to pull God's servant out of the pit.

Nothing is good for nothing. Old rags, old papers, old iron, old bones—all may be chopped up or melted down and turned into something good and useful.

And nobody is good for nothing. It doesn't matter how small you may be, or how humble, God has a place for you to fill and a work for you to do.

2. Secondly, I think these old rags tell us that *sometimes humble things are of more use than grand things.*

Up above in the treasury were many costly garments and fine jewels, but Ebed-melech passed them all by. They were of no use to him—it was the rags he needed.

And the rags did what the jewels couldn't do and what the rope couldn't do. The rope was very strong, but it couldn't help hurting; the jewels were very precious, but they couldn't make a soft cushion. That is what the rags could do.

Do you know the most wonderful plough in the world? It is the humble earthworm. One worm can turn over an acre of land in a year, and if it were not for the worms our soil would become as hard as flint, so that nothing would grow in it. What the bigger and grander creatures can't do the worm does.

Do you know the most wonderful chisel in the world? It is the piddock. Perhaps you have seen its shell on the seashore—a little, fragile white shell, not very remarkable and not very beautiful. But that little white shell has changed the geography and the history of Europe. If it were not for the piddock there would be no Straits of Dover—no "silver streak" dividing our land from the continent of Europe; and if you have studied your history you will know what a difference that little streak has made. What has the piddock to do with it? It has burrowed into the chalk to make a home for itself, and then the sea has

washed away the chalk until, at long last, the piddocks have made a passage twenty miles wide between England and France. What the great fishes could not do the tiny piddock has done.

There is something for the little people to do that the grown-ups can't do. Sometimes I think it is just being happy. God has given the children the special gift of happiness, and I have often heard grown-ups who were feeling worried or sad say, "It does me good to watch the children at their games." And sometimes I think it is just being loving and kind. For children can love in a special sort of way, and their love makes all the difference in the world to the grown-ups.

You will never be little again, so make good use of your time. Find out what you can do and do it.

3. But lastly I think these rags tell us *to be kind kindly.* The rope could have pulled Jeremiah up, but it would have hurt him. Ebed-melech thought of the rags, and he took the trouble to fetch them. Sometimes people spoil all their kind actions by the clumsy, thoughtless way they do them, and they end by doing more harm than good.

There is a fine story told of a kind deed done by Thackeray the novelist, but the best bit of the story is the beautiful way in which the deed was done. One day he went to visit an old lady who was very ill, and he soon saw that the chief cause of her illness was want of food. He thought he would prescribe for her himself, so when he went home he sent her a pill-box.

On the outside was written, "One to be taken when required," and when the old lady opened the box she found it full of golden sovereigns!

Boys and girls, if you are going to be kind, be kind kindly. It costs a little more trouble, but it is worth it. Don't forget to put the rags on the rope.

A BLACK FACE.

Their visage is blacker than a coal.—Lam. iv. 8.

We all know what it is to have a black face. There are three kinds of black faces in the world. Some people have all three, a good many people have two, and most people have at least one.

1. The first kind of black face is the face that is black by nature, the face of the South African negro. That's a jolly kind of black face with its good-humoured grin and its gleaming white teeth. It is a black that won't wash off, even with Brooks' Soap, for it is a black that the sun has developed through the ages. You know that when you go for a holiday in summer your great ambition is to get as brown as you possibly can. To that end you go about without a cap or hat, and if at the end of a fortnight or so your face and neck are pretty much the shade of your tan shoes you are as proud as Punch.

The negro's black is just a darker shade of your brown. Your skin turns brown to protect the blood underneath it from the too strong rays of the sun. The brown pigment, as it is called, which is found in the skin catches the sun's rays, absorbs them, and prevents

them from injuring the delicate blood-vessels under the skin. The sun at the tropics is blazing hot, so the natives of India and South Africa and the Pacific Islands are all shades of brown, from pale amber to such dark brown that it looks black, and we dub them "blackamoors."

Sometimes we are rather apt to be scornful about such dark-skinned people. There are those who have even been known to turn their noses up and make impolite remarks such as—"Oh, he's only a nigger!" If there should be any of these individuals here to-day, I should like to remind them that the nigger's is an honourable black face. It is a sensible black face. It is the black face that God wisely provided for him so that he might be able to live healthily and happily in the hottest parts of the globe.

2. The second kind of black face is the black face that we blacken at our work or our play. You boys all know what it is. So, as a rule, does the towel! It is a black that will come off with a diligent scrub. It is a good black too. It is the black of honest toil. It is the black of the miner and the coal-heaver and the chimney-sweep. It is a black that lets you know its owners have been doing their share of the great world's work.

3. The third kind of black face is the blackest face of all. It is the only one to be shunned, it is the only one to be ashamed of, and yet it is the kind most

frequently seen. What sort of black face is that? Let me ask you a second question, and the answer to it may give you the answer to the first. What is the blackest sky in nature? Is it not the inky blue-black sky that goes with a thunderstorm?—the sort of sky that is rent by flash after flash of jagged lightning? Well, the blackest face is the black scowling face that goes along with a storm of passion. We speak of "black looks," and that describes them perfectly. It doesn't matter though your cheeks are like roses and your skin like milk, when a storm of passion is raging in your heart your face is as black as it possibly can be.

The pity of it is that you don't see yourself then as others see you. Mother often tells you to look in the mirror when you have a smudge on your cheek or a dirty mark on your chin. It would be an excellent thing if someone took you to the mirror and showed you yourself in a rage. You would stop raging with sheer astonishment. Could that be you?—that hideous creature with twisted, swollen features and blazing eyes? Why, you looked stranger in your own familiar glass than you did in any of those queer "Going to" and "Coming from Lipton's" mirrors! And those bared teeth and that snarl! They reminded you of some savage beast going to bite! Quite right too. That snarl is just a relic of the wild beast in man. So are the scratching, and the kicking, and the biting, and a few more of the pleasant things that you feel inclined to do when you are in a proper rage.

Now the worst of this kind of black face is that the black won't wash off it any more than it will off the nigger's. But it won't wash off for a different reason. It won't wash off because it comes from the heart. The black face is just the black heart showing itself.

Then what are you to do about it? Well, you can get rid of the blackness in two ways. You can do something yourself to get rid of it, and you can ask God to help you to get rid of it. You can check that blackness when it first shows itself. Never let it grow into a big cloud. Disperse it when it appears. Blow it away, as the wind blows away the thunder-clouds, with a laugh at yourself or a kind word to others. If you let it grow and accumulate, and if you pile angry feeling upon angry feeling you cannot expect anything but a storm. Take it in time, then, and check it when it is small.

And ask God to help you to get rid of the blackness. The wind of His spirit and the gentleness of His love will do more than even your own efforts to put an end to your storms of passion. Go to Him when you feel the fit of rage coming on. Fly to Him when you are tempted to speak the hot, angry words. He will never fail you. And in His presence the vengeful look and the hasty word will vanish for ever.

CHILDREN OF THE NORTH WIND.

A stormy wind came out of the north.—Ezek. i. 4.

I HAVE been thinking lately that different people are rather like different winds. Some are North-wind people, some South-wind, some East-wind, and some West-wind. So I am going to speak to you about each of these winds and the people who are like them, and I hope you will be able to recognize yourself among them.

First of all, we shall have a talk about the North-wind people. I think you will find most of them among the boys, though you may find a few among the girls too.

Mr. North Wind is rather a blustering old fellow. He bursts open our doors and howls down our chimneys. He brings blizzards which chill us to the bone, and hard frosts which burst our water-pipes and crack our jugs if we are not careful. When he blows in real earnest he allows nothing to stand in his way. He snaps the bare branches off the trees, he tears the slates off our roofs, and dashes the hail against our windows. In fact, he makes a

great amount of noise, and does a good deal of destruction.

So much for Mr. North Wind himself; but what about the North-wind people? Well, they are the sort of folk you hear all over the house. You always know when they are in, because they immediately signal their entrance by slamming the front door. Then they dash upstairs two steps at a time, and slam another door at the top. Their boots seemed to be more "tackety" than anybody else's; at all events, they have the gift of clattering to a marvellous extent.

These people are destructive. They seem to have little regard for mother's good carpets or for any of her treasured possessions. It is not that they really want to destroy them; they just don't think. Their manners are a little rough, and they have rather a bad habit of speaking before they think, so that sometimes they damage other people's feelings as they damage the carpets—just for want of thought. Their tempers are somewhat breezy, but usually it is the case with them of a good storm and then all is over. The worst of it is that they sometimes do a good deal of destruction with these storms, and the effects are felt by others after the storms are forgotten by themselves.

But we are not going to say that Mr. North Wind has nothing but defects. Oh dear, no! He is really a decent sort of chap, and, to tell the truth, we are rather fond of him.

First of all, he is very bracing to strong people. He

blows away a lot of microbes and makes our blood tingle with health. And then, if he does frighten the plants so that they hide underground, he at least gives compensation, for he brings a thick blanket of snow to cover them up and keep them cosy so that they shoot up again stronger than ever in the spring.

And then he is an out-and-out fellow. There is no deceit about him. He doesn't pretend to be anything else but what he is. As he comes rushing along he shouts, "Here I am now; look out for squalls! Build up your fires, and put on your overcoats and your thickest boots, for when I begin to blow in good earnest you know what that means."

And he is a jolly fellow. He provides us with a lot of fun in the way of skating and sledging and snow-balling. In fact, we should miss him dreadfully if he deserted us altogether.

And neither could we get on without our North-wind people. They do a lot to cheer us up. They are a little rough in their way of doing it, but they are so jolly and good-hearted that we are ready to make allowances for that. They are very straight and above-board, and are often so anxious not to appear better than they are that they succeed in making people think they are a great deal worse than they are. You would be surprised to know how tender they can be to little weak things, just as Mr. North Wind is tender to the little weak plants and covers them up with snow. It is only by chance you may discover

this, because they are awfully ashamed to let other people know they have a soft spot in their hearts.

Just one word, in closing, to the North-wind people! Don't be proud of your roughness. It is nothing to be proud of. In fact if you persist in it, it will spoil and disfigure you in the end. The North Wind cannot help its roughness and harshness, because it is made that way and it comes to us over fields of ice and snow in the Polar regions. But you can help your roughness. It is something you wear on the outside. It is a habit which can be got rid of. But remember you will have to fight it, and you will have to *want* to fight it.

Boys and girls of the North Wind, let your good hearts tell. Don't keep them hidden away inside that hard exterior. Give yourselves into the keeping of Jesus, and He will help you to get rid of all your defects. He will make the hard places in your nature gentle, and the rough places smooth.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Exod. x. 19, xiv. 21; Acts xxvii. 13.

THE SAPPHIRE.

A sapphire stone.—Ezek. i. 26.

OUR September gem is the Sapphire.

You will remember that two months ago we said the sapphire was a cousin of the ruby. So it is—for both are corundum—only the ruby is red and the sapphire blue.

"Sapphire" is one of the oldest words in the world. It is found in most of the ancient languages, but clever men who have studied such things tell us that the name "sapphire" was not always given to the same stone. The sapphire of the ancients, they say, was more probably a stone which we now call the *lapis lazuli*, a blue stone with little gold flecks in it, which looks very like the sky on a starry night. These same clever men tell us that the stone we now call the sapphire was, in the days when the Book of Revelation was written, known as the jacinth or hyacinth. Well, we are not going to worry about that. We know that the sapphire *is* mentioned in the Bible, and whether it is called the sapphire or the jacinth does not matter very much for our purpose.

The sapphire is, next to the diamond, the hardest stone known. In proof of this there is an old tale that

a certain man once went to Rome to sell a sapphire. The purchaser said he would buy it on one condition—that he might first test it. He placed it on an anvil and struck it a mighty blow with a hammer. The hammer flew in pieces and the anvil split, but the stone remained whole. We may have to take that story with a large grain of salt, but it shows what a hard stone the sapphire was supposed to be.

Ceylon has, for ages, been noted for its sapphires. They are found there as crystals in water-borne deposits of sand and gravel. But Ceylon is not their only home. They come also from Siam, Upper Burma, Kashmir, Madagascar, Australia, Tasmania, and the United States. When they come from so many places you can understand that they are not so rare as rubies; still a sapphire is one of the most valuable and lovely of gems.

The shade for a sapphire is cornflower blue, but there are sapphires of every other shade of blue you can mention, beginning at dark indigo and ending with palest sky. There is even a white or colourless variety which is so like a diamond that it takes an expert to tell the difference. There is also a wonderful kind known as the star-sapphire. In its blue depths there shines a star. With the slightest movement of the gem the star seems to move and twinkle also. This star-sapphire has been called the gem for Christmas because its shining star reminds us of the star which shone in the sky two thousand years ago, and led the Wise Men to Bethlehem.

The sapphire has always been such a favourite that virtues of all kinds have been attributed to it. In olden days it was supposed to check fevers, calm the temper, mend manners, heal quarrels, and drive away melancholy. Funny, isn't it, that a blue stone should be supposed to frighten away "the blues"? It was said also to bring happiness and good fortune to its possessor. Last, but not least, it was the emblem of truth, of constancy, and of heavenly-mindedness. No wonder, then, that it has always been a favourite with the Church, and that in the cardinal's ring of office is set a sapphire gem.

Now, the diamond has already told us to be happy, the amethyst has told us to be true and loyal, so we are left with the last meaning of the sapphire as our message for to-day—"Be heavenly-minded." The ruby said, "Love"; the sapphire says, "*Love what is good.*" Love the best. Seek what is beautiful and true. Have noble aims and high ideals. That sounds a little difficult; perhaps this story will help to explain it.

A friend was visiting the studio of the great American artist, William Merritt Chase. He admired one by one all the many beautiful paintings in the room. Then he turned to the artist and said, "Which of all these paintings do you consider your best?" The artist walked over to a large empty canvas stretched in a frame, and said, "That is my best work. I am sorry I cannot show you that picture. I am always

trying to paint it, but it still creeps ahead of me. I have painted it there in my mind a thousand times, and some day, perhaps, I shall be able to paint it as I see it."

I want you to be like that famous artist. I want you to have beautiful thoughts that you want to make real, and noble dreams that you try to make true. For, boys and girls, you are the children of to-day, but you are the men and women of to-morrow. You have to make the world of to-morrow, and what your thoughts and dreams are, that—and exactly that—the world is going to be. For you are not going to stop at mere thoughts and dreams. You are going to turn these thoughts and dreams into deeds. I tell you solemnly that you can, if you will, make this world very nearly heaven upon earth. Yes, you can. High and pure and noble thoughts mean pure and noble deeds, and each pure and noble deed is just a little bit of heaven on earth.

See, then, that your sapphire is a star-sapphire. The star of Bethlehem led the three Wise Men to Heaven Itself come down to earth. Let your star-sapphire lead you too on and up to Christ.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Gen. ii. 12; Job xxviii. 19; Prov. iii. 15; Jer. xvii. 1; Ezek. xxvii. 16 (2), xxviii. 13; Matt. xiii. 45; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

WATCHMEN.

I have made thee a watchman.—Ezek. iii. 17.
Except the Lord keep the city,
The watchman waketh but in vain.—Ps. cxxvii. 1.

THE words of our first text were spoken to the prophet Ezekiel. God made him a watchman to warn Israel of the danger of their wicked ways.

But God is speaking these words also to you and to me. To each of us He is saying, "I have made *thee* a watchman."

Now a watchman is a very important person, and he has great responsibilities, so let us see if we can find out some of the things he has to do.

In the Old Testament we are told a great deal about watchmen. In those days the big cities were surrounded by strong walls, and the gates of the cities were always guarded by watchmen. Their business was to look out for enemies and to give warning of any danger. In time of war the number of the watchmen was greatly increased. They were stationed at different points round the wall, and each man was obliged to keep a sharp look-out on his part of the wall and to call out to the others if any danger threatened. The safety of the city depended on the carefulness and watchfulness of these men, and if one of them had

fallen asleep on duty the city would have been in great danger.

Now God has made us all watchmen. We have each a city to guard. Can you guess the name of the city? It is the city of our heart. God has made us soldiers. We are to fight His battles, and that is very difficult and very honourable work. But He has made us sentinels too, and a sentinel's work is even more difficult and more honourable than a soldier's, for the safety of the army or the city depends on him.

If the enemy came with a great flourish of trumpets and beating of drums, it would be easy enough to defend our city. But he very rarely does that. He creeps in very quietly and very cunningly, so stealthily sometimes that we never notice him till he is right inside and our city is betrayed.

Here is the name of one of our enemies. He is called General Hot Temper. He has a way of taking us suddenly by surprise. He lies in wait close to our wall and rushes on us when we are off our guard. He makes a big hole in our wall to enter by, and each time he comes he makes the hole bigger. If we don't mend the wall and keep a closer guard, some day he will take possession of our city.

Here is the name of another enemy. He is called Colonel Selfishness. He takes our wall down stone by stone, very slowly, but very surely. He creeps quietly into our city and conquers it bit by bit. So we must see that the stones are put in their places

again and that the wall is carefully patrolled day and night.

And here is the name of yet another enemy. He is called Captain Meanness. He has a cunning way of attacking us. He makes a great disturbance at one gate of the city, and when we hurry to defend it he rushes in at quite another gate. So we must be very alert in order to keep him out. He is one of the most despicable of our foes.

There are other enemies too — Major Envy, and Lieutenant Discontent, and Sergeant Ill-Humour, and Corporal Laziness, and a host of others. You each know your own. The important thing is to keep them out at the beginning. If you don't, they will bring a bigger and a bigger army with them each time, until at last they may overwhelm you altogether.

And that is where the second text comes in. We can never be quite sure that our city is secure unless God is watching with us—

> Except the Lord keep the city,
> The watchman waketh but in vain.

These words have been chosen as the motto of the city of Edinburgh. I wonder how many of you have visited Edinburgh. I wonder how many of you have walked along Princes Street and looked up at the Castle built high on the top of a precipitous rock. At the other side you approach the Castle by quite a gentle slope, but on this side is the sheer precipice. It looks as if it would be impossible to scale that rock,

yet once upon a time the fortress was taken on this very side.

It happened in this way. Six hundred years ago Robert Bruce was fighting for the freedom of Scotland. But Edinburgh Castle was in the hands of the English, and although he very much wished to take it, he did not know how it was to be done.

At last a man called Francis told Sir Thomas Randolph, one of Bruce's leaders, of a narrow path which led up the steepest part of the rock. The Castle wall was low at that side, and no guard was set as no attack was expected from that point. In the darkness Francis led Randolph and thirty men up the steep path. They leapt over the wall and found the garrison asleep, all except the guard at the gate. So the Castle was taken—even the strong Castle of Edinburgh, which depended on its own strength.

Except the Lord keep the city,
The watchman waketh but in vain.

If we want to keep *our* city safe we must ask God to watch with us. He is the best of all watchmen, for He is never weary. He never slumbers or sleeps. He will keep us if we ask Him, and when His love is all round us and over us then we are safe indeed.

A FLAME, A FOX, AND AN ENVIOUS PERSON.

Sour grapes.—Ezek. xviii. 2.

DID you ever notice the blackness of the ceiling above a gas bracket? There is usually a smoky circle on the white ceiling exactly above the spot where a gas jet burns. It is the same with a candle. If your candlestick stands always in the same place, ten to one there will be a grimy mark overhead. Then take a look at the back of the dining-room grate in the morning, when the cinders are out of it. You will notice that where the fire has been hot all the bricks are burnt clean, but higher up, where the flames have not reached, the back and sides of the grate, and the chimney too, are covered with a coating of smoke or soot. You see, what the flame cannot reach it blackens, and that brings us to our text, though you will say, "I don't see much connection between sour grapes, a flame, and a blackened ceiling."

Suppose we make it into a riddle, and suppose instead of "sour grapes" we use the word "envy," let us see if that will make sense. Why is envy like a flame? Can you give me the answer? Because what it cannot reach it blackens. Ah, now you have

it! "Sour grapes!" we say, when we hear anybody running down anything which we know they particularly wanted to get, but have not succeeded in getting. We are going back in our minds to the old fable of the hungry fox who found the grapes in the vineyard growing beyond his reach. You remember that in spite of all his leaping he could not leap as high as the grapes, so he turned away with a sneer, and said, "Anybody can have those for all I care. They are a lot of sour, nasty things."

The fox and the flame and envious people are all alike in this—they blacken what they cannot reach. And, boys and girls, I don't want you to join them. I don't want you to be blackeners in this world. I don't want you to run down people or things simply because they are above or beyond your reach. Don't say a prize isn't worth having because another boy has won it. Don't say a girl is "stuck-up" because she happens to live in a slightly bigger house or wear slightly better clothes than you do.

Let me give you three reasons why you should not be blackeners.

1. *It hurts others.*—You never know when a word spoken in sheer spite or envy, with no real truth behind it, may be understood by somebody else as a fact, and repeated by them as such. If you say, with a vicious snap of your mouth, "I don't believe So-and-so is a bit clever though she won the composition prize. It's pure grind with her, and I'm

certain her home people help her with her essays," the likelihood is that poor So-and-so will after that be labelled as "the girl whose father writes her essays." And the worst of it is that there won't be a grain of truth in the story. It will all have arisen out of your own envious little heart which was sore because that essay prize did not come your way. Envy that means evil-speaking is dangerous; so don't let the flame of your jealousy blacken other people's lives.

2. *It hurts yourself.*—You can't blacken others without blackening yourself. Envy will hurt you even more than it hurts other people. It will hurt you because it will make you unhappy in your own soul. And it will hurt you because it will make you shunned by your companions. We avoid the people who say sharp or biting things. We feel that if they say them about others they will say them about us as soon as our back is turned. So we avoid the blackeners and choose as friends those who will be true and generous and loyal, both before our face and behind our back. That is why blackeners are never favourites.

3. *It is a great waste of energy.*—To go back to the smoke—you know that smoke is just unburnt fuel. It is so much burning matter wasted, and if we could only make all our grates and chimneys consume their own smoke like those of some large factories, our

fires would be hotter and they would burn far less coal.

Now it is the same with envy. If, instead of wasting its energy in saying bitter things, envy would stick in and work hard, it would soon win a better prize than the one it failed to get. If the fox in the fable, instead of sneering, had spent his time in hunting the vineyard for a bunch of grapes that grew nearer the ground, I've no doubt he would have had his reward in a fine juicy cluster; and what is more, he would have been able to say quite joyfully as he munched them up, "Ah, these are grand! I never tasted finer." Hard work, you see, takes away the hard feeling.

Better still, boys and girls, join love to hard work. The two combined will burn away from your heart every trace of the black and bitter smoke of envy.

CORAL.

Coral.—Ezek. xxvii. 16.

HERE is December, the last month of the year, and it brings us to the last stone in our imaginary talisman. What do you think I have chosen as the last jewel? Why, the very first gem that a child wears—one that I expect most of you knew by sight before you knew it by name—I mean the coral. It used to be the fashion to give babies a bit of coral to bite on, so that it might help their teeth to cut the gum, and one of the nicest presents for a baby girl is supposed to be a string of coral beads.

Well, I can't tell if you have any corals of your own, but, if not, very likely one of your little friends has a string, and at any rate you know corals when you see them. Do you know their story too? It is a sea story. And as wonderful as any fairy tale.

Long, long ago people used to be very puzzled about coral. They thought it was a flower of the sea, but how it came to be so hard they could not tell. The fishermen who brought it up in their nets

from the bottom of the ocean said that was easily explained. The coral was soft so long as it was under water, but the moment it reached the air it turned hard as a rock.

But there was one man who was not satisfied with that explanation, so he hired a diver to go down and examine the coral at the bottom of the sea. The diver came up and reported that the coral was every bit as hard there as it was above water. When the good man heard this he was so anxious to see if it were true that he actually went down himself to prove it.

Nowadays, thanks to him and all the other wise folk who have studied the subject, we know that the coral is not a flower. It is the skeleton of a little sea animal called a polyp. When it is born this little animal is like a soft pear-shaped piece of jelly. But it doesn't remain long like that. It fastens on to some object on the floor of the ocean—a stone, a bottle, a bit of wrecked ship, or even a cannon ball. Then it begins to grow and harden and spread itself. It draws out of the water the carbonate of lime—the stuff of which the oyster makes the pearl—and from the carbonate it grows its bones or frame. It first spreads into a dome shape like an orange cut in half, then it shoots out one little horn after another, till there is a perfect rosette of horns or branches growing from the dome, or foot, as it is called.

But there are corals of other shapes besides the

rosette. There are some which look like huge sponges, only you had better not try to wash your face with them! There are others which are fan-shaped, and still others which grow like a set of organ pipes. Some have long branches like the branches of a tree, others still are not unlike a large cauliflower. And you should just see the colours!—green, white, red, pink, yellow, and black. They make the bed of the ocean look like a gorgeous garden.

Those of you who are fond of stories about pirates, and the South Seas, and treasure trove, have often read of coral islands. Well, these coral islands have all been built by the industrious little coral polyps. Though they are so tiny, they have built a reef 1000 miles in extent along the north-east coast of Australia.

The red and pink gem coral does not come from the South Seas. It is found in the Mediterranean, chiefly off the coasts of Sicily and Corsica. It is taken to Italy and cut and polished there. Some of it is made into round beads, some into oval beads, some of it is left like tiny branches. The larger pieces are cut into cameos for rings or brooches, and the largest pieces of all are made into ornaments, such as umbrella handles. One very curious ornament is made oftener than any other. It is a coral hand. The Italians and the Spaniards and many other races believe that if they wear this little coral hand it will act as a charm to keep away evil. They say

that a coral talisman will ward off what they call "the evil eye."

That reminds me of the story of an old lady who lived in London during the air raids. She was talking to an officer home from the front who had seen how a bomb could pass through storey after storey of a building, and then blow it sky high. The officer asked her if she was nervous. "Not in the least!" she replied. "You see I am quite safe. I have put a tarpaulin awning over my house."

The coral has as much power to protect anyone from evil as that tarpaulin awning had to protect the poor old lady's house from bombs.

But, boys and girls, those who believe in things like coral charms are right in this. We do need something to protect us against evil. We need a talisman very badly on our way through this world. We shall meet evil time and again, and as we grow older we shall have many a grim fight with it. What is going to help us? No coral hand, no lucky black cat, no woolly mascot will aid us in that struggle. There is only one talisman that will be of any use, and that is Christ in the heart. If we wear that talisman, no evil can befall us. Christ will help us in every battle against what is wrong.

We have had many messages from the different jewels throughout the year, but no message is more important than the message of the coral. "Wear the only true talisman." If we do that, all the

virtues that the other jewels spoke of will come easily to us.[1]

[1] The texts of the sermons in this series are Gen. ii. 12; Job xxviii. 19; Prov. iii. 15; Jer. xvii. 1; Ezek. i. 26, xxvii. 16 (2), xxviii. 13; Matt. xiii. 45; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

THE AGATE.

They occupied (RV "traded") in thy fairs with . . . agate. —Ezek. xxvii. 16.

THE agate is our stone for June.

Perhaps the name agate doesn't mean anything to you. When people speak of a diamond or a pearl you have at once a little picture in your mind; but an agate! Let me see if I can draw a picture of an agate in your mind. Do you know a kind of sweet that is in layers—brown, cream, and pink, or green, white, and brown? Sometimes the layers are one above the other, sometimes they are in rings, and the sweet looks like slices of a tiny jam roll with all the jam in the middle, or like the rings that you see in the trunk of a tree that has been sawn through. Well, if you can imagine something of that kind in stone, you see an agate; only, the colours are oftener grey and brown and red and yellow than green or pink.

Striped agates are known as banded or ribbon agates, and those with circles are known as ring or eye agates. But there are agates with more curious markings still. For instance, some have a pattern zigzagging across them, and these are known

as fortification agates because the zigzags are supposed to resemble the walls and angles of a fortress. Others have feathery designs which make them look as if a piece of seaweed or moss had become embedded in them. These are spoken of as moss agates.

The name "agate" itself is taken from a river in Sicily which used to be called the Achates. It is now the Drillo. In the bed of this river the agates of ancient times were found. To-day agates are found in many countries—India, China, America, South Africa, Australia, Brazil. But you will find them also nearer home, for agates are discovered in many parts of Scotland—indeed, they are often known as Scotch pebbles. You will see them in any shop where they sell Highland jewellery. But of course you won't mix them up with the clear yellow or pale brown crystal so often set in kilt brooches. That is the cairngorm or Scotch topaz.

The agate may not be so valuable as some other precious stones, but it has a beauty all its own, and it is useful as well as beautiful. It is very hard—harder even than steel—and because it does not rust as steel would, it is used in the making of certain scientific instruments. The knife-edge on which the beam of a chemical balance is suspended is made of agate; and pestles and mortars for pounding hard substances are also cut from the stone.

The agate's strange markings and figures made it

specially suitable for amulets. And in olden times people who believed in such fancies used to attribute certain virtues to it. They said it was a symbol of strength and mastery, and that its wearer was sure of victory. Then, too, it was supposed to heal diseases of the eye, and to be an antidote against the bite of spiders or scorpions. It was also said to quench thirst and cure fever. It was a pet stone of the weather clerk, for it was believed to control the weather. In ancient Persia it was said to ward off tempests; and in Arabia prayers for rain were frequently made to an idol of red agate in the Mohammedan temple, the Kaaba, at Mecca.

We are inclined to smile at these ideas, for we know how untrue they are; but the poor agate can't help all the foolish fables that have grown up around it. If the agate could speak, it would say, "Forget all the stupid tales that people have made up about me, and I'll tell you a tale more wonderful—the true tale of how I came to be.

"Thousands of years ago, when the world was being made, there were certain rocks formed by matter boiling up from the hot centre of the earth. As these molten rocks cooled, empty air spaces like bubbles were left in them here and there. But these air spaces did not remain empty. Into them flowed gradually layer upon layer, coating after coating of a stuff called silica. Sometimes the silica was grey or clear, sometimes it was tinged with red or brown or yellow. Occasionally it was coloured with

pink or purple or green. At last all the air space was filled and became hard and solid, and there was I!

"By and by the stone round about me began to crumble and decay, but I was so hard that I did not decay with it, and so I was set free. I rolled from my old home into the bed of a stream, and here I am! Outside I am a plain uninteresting-looking fellow, inside I am a creature of lovely colours. Cut me and polish me, and you will have a thing of beauty for ever."

That is the agate's story, and its message to us comes from that story. It is this—"Be beautiful within."

The agate is not lovely to look upon till you cut it and see its heart. Its outer coat is not the best of it. Now, I am sorry to say that with some people their outer coat, that is to say, their appearance, is the best of *them*. They are lovely to look upon, but their hearts are black and ugly. Perhaps we are inclined to envy beauty. We long for curly hair or a straight nose, or a favourite shade of eyes, and our hair is lank, or our nose turns up, and our eyes are green. Well, the agate has a cheering message for us. It tells us that it is not less valuable though its outer covering is plain. What really matters is the beauty in its heart. And that is a beauty we too can have. We can all be kind and gentle, unselfish and loving, straight, and true.

Beauty of heart! Let us all try to have it. For that is the beauty that lasts, that is the beauty that is loveliest, that is the beauty that is best beloved.[1]

[1] The texts of the sermons in this series are Gen. ii. 12; Job xxviii. 19; Prov. iii. 15; Jer. xvii. 1; Ezek. i. 26, xxvii. 16 (2), xxviii. 13; Matt. xiii. 45; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

OLD IRON.

Bright iron.—Ezek. xxvii. 19.
Rust.—Matt. vi. 19.

To-day we have two texts and they have both come with me to the pulpit. The first is "bright iron," and here you have a nice, bright, sharp penknife. The other is the enemy of bright iron. Now, of course, bright iron has just one enemy—that is "rust," so here is a bit of old rusty iron that once lived on a rubbish-heap.

Which of those two things looks best, and which do you think is of most use? There isn't much doubt about the answer, is there? But if you don't take proper care of your penknife it may soon look just like this piece of rusty old iron.

What is it that makes iron rust? Scientists will tell you that it is something in the air that acts upon the surface of the iron, burning or oxidizing it. If there is water present this process takes place more easily, so that if you leave an iron article out of doors on a wet day it will rust much more readily than on a fine day. If you don't take trouble to remove the rust it will gradually eat away the iron.

Now, people as well as iron can rust. They are not

meant to rust; they are meant to be bright and useful; but if they *will* allow the rust to form, and *will not* take the trouble to remove it, of course all their brightness and usefulness is spoiled.

There are two reasons why rust forms on iron—first, want of use, and second, want of care.

1. First, rust forms from *want of use.* If you lay past an iron or steel article for some time, the chances are you will find it covered with rust when you take it out again. But if you keep on using it it stays clean and bright. Now it is just like that with the gifts God gives us. He has given us hands to work with, but if we don't employ them, they will become clumsy and useless. He has given us minds to think with, but if we don't cultivate them they will become stupid and dull. He has given us hearts to love and sympathize with, but if we don't use them they will become hard and cold.

One great enemy of usefulness is laziness. Sometimes we think it is very hard to have to go to school and learn difficult lessons. But it is just by learning these hard lessons that we are keeping our minds bright and free from rust. And when we are learning to do anything with our hands we sometimes grow impatient at having to repeat the same thing over and over again, but it is just that drudgery that is making them clever for more difficult work.

I read the other day about a gentleman who was very much interested in a boy. He wanted to help

him, so he asked his head gardener to take him into the garden and teach him gardening. Some time after he met the gardener and inquired how his young friend was getting on. "Oh, he's getting on," replied the gardener; "there he is at his favourite job, and it just suits him exactly—chasing the snails off the path!" Now, if we are lazy and won't take pains to learn, the rust will soon grow on us, and rust, you know, clogs wheels and stops progress. If we are idle we shall never get much farther than that lazy snail of a boy who spent his time chasing his brother-snails off the path.

The other great enemy of usefulness is selfishness. You remember the story of the man who had only one talent and who went and hid it in the ground. That man had many faults, but his biggest one was selfishness. He kept his talent all to himself. Now, God endows us all with gifts, and He means us to use them and make the most of them. To some people He gives strength, to some brains, to some wealth, to some just ordinary common sense and a sound body. But, whatever His gifts may be, He means us to use them for the sake of others. They are not really ours to keep: we have them on trust from Him; and if we allow them to grow rusty from want of use then we are abusing His trust.

2. But, second, rust forms from *want of care.* If you put away your bicycle in the winter, or your skates in the summer, without drying them and

rubbing in some grease, you need not expect to take them out again bright and shining. If you leave your bicycle out in the rain for days on end you must look for rust on the handle-bars. And if we don't take preventive measures to keep ourselves bright the ugly red rust of all kinds of faults will grow on us.

When the *Great Eastern* was laying the big cable across the Atlantic to America she received frequent messages from the shore. At first these messages reached the ship quite clear and distinct, but gradually they grew fainter and fainter. Then they became jumbled and broken, and at last they ceased altogether.

So the men on the ship knew there must be something wrong with the cable, and they hauled it up. They found that a little crack had come on the wire; then rust had got in and eaten away the wire; until at last the crack became too wide for any message to pass. Not until the cable had been mended could any message be sent along.

And so if you have been careless and allowed the rust of selfishness, or ill-temper, or pride to grow and spoil your usefulness you must get it put right. And how shall we get it put right? By taking these faults to God and asking Him for Jesus' sake to forgive them and help us to get the better of them.

Outside a smithy you have often seen bits of old iron—old ploughs, old harrows, odds and ends of all kinds—all more or less rusty. If you asked the blacksmith what he was going to do with them he

would probably tell you that some of the things had been brought to him to sharpen or mend, but others he was going to melt down to make into horseshoes or other useful articles.

Some of us may just need sharpening and polishing to get the rust away, some of us may have to begin all over again. But of one thing we may be sure. If we put ourselves in God's hands, He will do what is best for us, He will turn us out beautiful, spotless "bright iron."

THE EMERALD.

The emerald.—Ezek. xxviii. 13.

MAY brings us green woods and green fields, but it brings us something greener than these—the greenest green in nature—the emerald.

Somebody has called the emerald God's favourite stone, because green seems to be God's favourite colour. Did you ever think what a lot of green God has put into the world? You see God knows that green is the best colour for our eyes to rest on, so He has made it the prevailing shade. Imagine how dreadful it would be if everything now green were red! We should go mad with the glare. Or blue! We should all have the blues in a week. Or white! Our eyes would be so dazzled that they would lose their sight.

The emerald has a name not its own. Emerald means "the rent or torn rock," and the original owner of the name was a massive green marble veined as if it had been torn or rent asunder. In the Bible it is doubtful if the word translated emerald means exactly the same stone as our emerald. It may be rather a piece of rock crystal.

But the emerald was known in Bible days all the

same, for, as long ago as one thousand six hundred and fifty years before Christ came—that is to say, about three thousand six hundred years ago — emeralds were being mined by the Egyptians on the west coast of the Red Sea. In the beginning of last century a French explorer discovered these mines, and found there the very tools which had been used by the Egyptian workmen so many years ago. Ethiopia, too, was a country from which the emerald came in ancient times.

To-day our finest emeralds come from South America. Muzo, in Columbia, on the slopes of the Andes, is the name of the place. Some emeralds are found also in the Ural Mountains in Siberia, but they do not compare with their South American brothers.

When the Spaniards conquered Mexico and Peru they found an immense quantity of magnificent emeralds in the possession of the natives. These they took as spoil, and sent them home over the seas to Spain. No doubt many of these stones are being worn in Spain at this very minute.

The Mexicans called the emerald "quetzalitzali," that is to say, "the stone of the quetzal." The quetzal is a Mexican bird with plumage of a brilliant green resembling the stone. Its plumes were worn as a sign of royalty by the rulers of Mexico and Central America, and because of the resemblance of colour the emerald was considered a royal stone.

There are tales of huge emeralds the size of a hen's egg, but these tales are fables, for the emerald is not

a large stone. At the same time, it is a very rare gem, and a specimen without a flaw is practically priceless. The emerald does not sparkle with hidden fire like the diamond. It owes its beauty to its cool depth of colour.

History tells us of some remarkable stones. In 1488 the Sultan of Turkey sent to the reigning Pope a beautiful emerald engraved with the head of Christ. Legend says that this emerald was engraved in the time of Christ by order of the Roman Emperor, Tiberius Cæsar. But that sounds too good to be true. Unfortunately all trace of this gem has been lost.

Nero the cruel had an eyeglass made out of an emerald, and through it he watched the gladiators fight in the arena at Rome.

Our own King Henry the Second had an emerald ring which was presented to him along with Ireland. That is really why Ireland is known as "the Emerald Isle," though it deserves the name on account of its fresh greenness.

Then Napoleon wore an emerald at the Battle of Austerlitz. Perhaps he hoped it would bring him success, for that is said to be the gift which the emerald brings to its wearer.

There are other beliefs attached to it. It is supposed to help the memory. Does it keep it green? I wonder. To the Eastern it is a symbol of unchanging faithfulness. That is perhaps why the apostle John in the Book of Revelation tells us that round the throne which he saw in heaven was a rainbow like an emerald. It was there to show that God is faithful

to all His promises. Strangely enough, the emerald was chosen by the Church as the apostle John's special stone. It was supposed to represent his youth and gentleness.

Now I want you to get back to the success idea, and take as the message of the emerald, "*Make a success of your life.*"

Frankly, we do not believe that merely wearing an emerald will make anybody successful. And if the emerald could speak, it would be the first to say, "Wear me if you like. I'll do my best, but you must do your best as well." Yes, that's it. Success does not come to you if you sit down and wait for it to arrive. You have to get up and hustle around and search for it. You have to work downright hard to find it. The royal road to success is not paved with emeralds. It is paved with the stones called "Go ahead" and "Stick in" and "Hold on"—especially the last; for the most successful people are those who refuse to acknowledge that they are beaten, and hold on doggedly long after others have lost heart and given in.

There you have the recipe for *worldly success*, boys and girls. Take it if you want it. But remember that worldly success is not the most important success. It is *other-worldly success* that matters. The most successful man is not the man who heaps up the greatest wealth and owns the costliest possessions. The most successful man is the man who succeeds in growing

most like Christ, the man who is bravest, and purest, and strongest, and gentlest, and most tender, and loving, and unselfish. His pockets may be pretty empty, and he may be a failure from the millionaire's point of view; but from God's point of view he is rich indeed, and he alone is the truly successful man.

Mr. Choate, who for some years was American ambassador in London, was once interviewed by a reporter who asked him the secret of his success. "What do you call success?" asked Mr. Choate. "Oh! wealth, and ease, and comfort, and reputation," said the reporter. "That is not my idea of success," replied the ambassador. "Many men succeed without winning any one of these. Character is the vital thing after all."

That was a fine answer. And that is the kind of success the emerald wishes you to win.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Gen. ii. 12; Job xxviii. 19; Prov. iii. 15; Jer. xvii. 1; Ezek. i. 26, xxvii. 16 (2); Matt. xiii. 45; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

A STORY OF COURAGE.

But if not.—Dan. iii. 18.

MOST boys and girls like the Book of Daniel. They never tire of reading the stories in it. What finer tale of adventure could you find than the one about Daniel in the den of lions? When you first read it didn't you wonder whether God would have shut the mouths of the bloodthirsty beasts if you had been put into a den of lions for doing what was right?

And of course you remember the story about the three youths in the fiery furnace. You may not have liked it so well. Perhaps the reason was that you missed the point in it. You thought more about the miracle than about the young men; you forgot that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were really three wonderful heroes. Did you ever know a boy who "set his teeth" when he made up his mind to do a certain thing that was difficult? Well, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were told that they were to be cast into a burning fiery furnace because they had dared to disobey the king. And they were not afraid; they just answered calmly, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O

king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Their minds were made up; they had "set their teeth." They believed in the God of Israel, and they were prepared to face a cruel death rather than fall down and worship the image Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. It was just as if they had said, "You may do what you like to us; but it won't make us budge one inch."

Those Hebrew youths remind me of a young Scotsman who went to be a mechanic missionary in Central Africa. He was in a very lonely part. He had no friends near, and the king of the district was a cruel savage. He murdered white people without giving it a thought. Among many other Englishmen a Bishop fell a victim. Then the king turned his eye of death on the young Scotsman, whose name, I may tell you, was Mackay. But he met the savage king's look, we are told, "with calm blue eyes that never winked."

Courage is not always easy. There is a story of King Henry of Navarre at the siege of Cahors. He performed wonderful feats of valour in the thick of the most desperate fighting, and all the while kept cursing himself because he was so cowardly. It was only by the supreme effort of a very strong will that he kept under the terror which, to himself, seemed always to be on the point of mastering him. There is often fear where there is true courage; the courageous man just keeps his presence of mind as far as he can.

Here is a little bit of a letter written by a very brave

and famous young captain in the Flying Corps during the Great War. "Don't think me unfair wishing to go again, for I don't do it because I wish to. I shall find it hard to go, but you will all back me up, and I will try again to help my country and bring credit to my dear mother.

I thought I would send you this letter, for I am feeling all poo-poo, and it always helps me if I tell my mother."

You are not likely to be given the chance of being brave as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were, but every one of you will have to go through the fiery furnace of temptation. It may be heated for you with ridicule. "Ridicule," said a famous priest, "is God's fire for the burning of the stubble of humbug and solemn sham." But it is hard for even a brave boy or girl to bear it for the time being.

A young man was speaking to a clergyman at the close of a meeting. Among other things, he said: "Some years ago at a mission service I decided to accept Christ; and I determined that my first act on the following morning should be to tell my sister about it. When I went downstairs and told her she laughed right out at me, and from that time I have given it all up." But after further conversation and prayer, the clergyman had good reason to believe the wandering backslider was restored, and that, trusting in the keeping power of his Saviour, he was able to face ridicule and remain true to his Lord.

Boys and girls, when the fiery day of temptation comes, how will you meet it? Will you be brave like the three Hebrew children? If you are, you will come out of the furnace nobler and stronger. You will prove yourself a hero in the sight of God.

WISH-BONES OR BACK-BONES?

Then this Daniel was distinguished above the presidents and the satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him.—Dan. vi. 3.

ONCE a printer made a funny mistake when he was copying this verse. Instead of printing "an excellent spirit" he put "an excellent spine"; and so the verse read that Daniel was distinguished above the presidents and the satraps, "because an excellent spine was in him"!

But don't you think that that was a very good description of this brave wise man of old? Once a famous preacher (Mr. Spurgeon) was talking to some young people, and he asked them, "Why did the lions not eat Daniel?" He had some quite clever answers, and then he gave his own—"Because he was almost all of him *back-bone*, and what was left of him was *grit*."

Yes, that was just Daniel's outstanding characteristic—"he was almost all of him back-bone." But his back-bone didn't begin to grow just when he was thrown into the lions' den. He cultivated it long years before when, as a boy of fourteen, he was taken captive and brought into a strange heathen land. And that was why it stood him in such good stead when he was over eighty.

We are so accustomed to associate Daniel with the lions' den that I think we are a little apt to overlook that other splendid story which is told of him in the first chapter of this book.

About six hundred years before Christ, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, laid siege to Jerusalem and carried away captive certain lads of the royal house of Judah. These boys were taken to be educated in the royal college at Babylon so that they might afterwards enter the king's service. Their course was to extend over three years, and they were to be instructed in all the learning and wisdom of the Chaldeans.

Now among these lads were Daniel and three friends —Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom we know later as the heroes of the fiery furnace. Daniel must have been just about fourteen at the time, because seventeen was the age at which youths were admitted into the king's service. He had not been long at college before a big temptation met him. The governor who had been placed in charge of the boys had been instructed that they were to be fed with meats and dainties from the king's table, but Daniel determined that he would not partake of this food, and he asked that he might be excused.

Now, at first sight, it seems to us that Daniel was making a fuss about trifles. The food was good and well-cooked. It was no doubt the richest and best that could be procured, and Daniel was a boy with a boy's appetite and a boy's love of nice things to eat. Why then did he refuse to eat from the king's table?

Well, there was a deeper reason than at first appears and one that is a little difficult for us to understand. Daniel was a Jew, and for a Jew it was wrong to eat certain kinds of meat, because these meats were offered to idols. To partake of them meant that you were associating yourself with heathen customs and beliefs. If Daniel had eaten that food it would have been equal to denying his God. And Daniel meant to be true to God even though he was a lonely captive in a heathen land, and though his loyalty might cost him his head. I daresay some of the other boys who weren't so loyal and brave laughed at him and called him a fool for his pains, but Daniel had resolved to do the right thing, no matter what happened.

So he refused. But you will notice he didn't do it rudely or aggressively. Very quietly and firmly and politely he asked to be excused. Now, the governor liked Daniel; he had a great opinion of him, and he would willingly have granted his request, but, unfortunately, king's orders were king's orders, and to disobey the orders of an Eastern monarch generally meant losing your head. Much as he liked Daniel, the governor was not willing to go so far for him. He was responsible for the boys, and what if they got thin and weak on the plain vegetable diet Daniel asked for? Then the king would demand the reason, and he (the governor) would have to pay the consequences. No, no, he was very sorry but he could not grant Daniel's request.

Well, Daniel was a gentleman as well as a hero.

He was quite ready to run risks for himself, but he didn't want another to have his head chopped off on his account, so he turned to someone else for assistance.

This other person was the steward whom the governor had appointed to look after Daniel and his friends. Daniel suggested to him that he and his three companions should be fed for ten days on the plain vegetable food, and if at the end of that time they looked leaner or paler or less strong than the rest of the boys, then he might deal with them as he would.

The steward was a good-natured man and he consented to Daniel's proposal. No great harm could be done in ten days, surely. So the boys ate their plain food, and at the end of the time they were fatter and rosier than any of the others. And the result was that the steward agreed that the rich diet should be removed, and that they should have the simple fare they wished during the rest of their college career.

When their time of training was over they were brought before the king, and among all the students there was not one to compare with Daniel and his three friends. In wisdom and understanding they were found ten times better than all the astrologers and magicians in the kingdom. Moreover, out of all the captives these four boys were chosen to attend in person on the king, and that was the highest possible honour.

What is the lesson of Daniel? It is the lesson of

the back-bone. Listen to this little rhyme which I came across the other day—

> There's a charming little motto
> Which a kind friend gave to me,
> And it runs, "Don't wear your wish-bone,
> Where your back-bone ought to be."

That is the trouble with so many of us. We wear our wish-bone where our back-bone ought to be. We *wish* to do the right thing and the straight thing, but we don't put our *back* into it. We are afraid of what others will say. We are afraid that others may laugh. We are afraid of the consequences. But wish-bones won't do instead of back-bones. We shall never be heroes or even men at that rate.

How are we to get our back-bone where our back-bone ought to be? I know of one way only. It is to follow steadfastly in the steps of a greater Hero than Daniel, to ask His help and to count on it. He never faltered in duty, never flinched in danger, and He can put some of His own strong spirit within us and make heroes of cowards.

A CAKE NOT TURNED.

Ephraim is a cake not turned.—Hos. vii. 8.

WHAT kind of cake is meant here? It is a sort of scone that the people in the East baked on hot stones or ashes. It had to be very carefully watched, and turned at exactly the right moment, otherwise it was burnt on the one side and raw and indigestible on the other. You can imagine such a cake would not be very good to eat.

Now, the prophet says here that "Ephraim is a cake not turned." Ephraim was a name given to the kingdom of Israel, but what does he mean by saying that Israel is a cake not turned? Well, he means that the people were not thorough—some things they over-did, and other things they underdid or neglected altogether. They were very religious in one sense, for they worshipped Jehovah and many heathen gods besides, but they did not carry their religion into their everyday life. It did not help to make them kinder, or truer, or more just. And so they were like a cake that someone had forgotten to turn. Not only did they leave one side raw and unwholesome, but *they spoiled the side they did cook.*

Now, I wonder if there are any unturned cakes here.

Perhaps there are. People did not give up being one-sided in the days when Hosea lived, and they have not given it up yet, and so there are many good cakes still being spoiled. Shall I tell you some of the things that spoil them?

1. Well, first there are besetting faults. You know what a besetting fault is, don't you? It is our commonest fault—the one that is always lying in wait ready to trip us up when we are least expecting it. Perhaps there is a besetting fault that is spoiling your cake. Perhaps there is a whole side of you turned black and bitter, and a whole other side that nobody is getting the good of because of some fault.

Here is somebody who is very warm-hearted and generous, but who flies into a passion about trifles. He is an unturned cake — too much done on the temper side, and too little done on the patience side.

Here is somebody else who is most kind and obliging, but who, if he meets a bad boy or girl, just follows wherever they lead. He is uncooked on the will side.

And here is someone who is very patient and painstaking, but ask him to give up or to give in—he won't move an inch. He is overdone on the obstinate side, and underdone on the unselfish and obliging side.

Perhaps you may not find yourself among any of these people; but if you think for a minute, you may find some other fault—is it disobedience, or untruthfulness, or laziness?—that is spoiling your cake.

2. But there are other things that spoil cakes, and among these are the duties we leave undone and the powers we neglect to develop.

Now, I expect there is some thing that most of you can do better than you do other things. Perhaps you paint well, or you are musical, or a good English scholar, or quick at sums. Perhaps you are clever with your hands — you can make wonderful things with a bit of wood and a few nails, or, if you are a girl, with a bit of muslin and a needle and thread. Now, it is right that you should try to make the most of these gifts—God means you to do that—but don't neglect the things you are not so clever at and that you like less.

A great preacher speaks in one of his sermons about an artist of last century who never painted a picture without putting a brown tree in the foreground. He fancied himself at brown trees, and so he always stuck one in the foreground of his picture. And then the preacher goes on to say that we all have our "brown trees" which we think we can do well, and he shows how they spoil us for other things.

I have known boys and girls whose "brown trees" were arithmetic, or composition, or Latin. They excelled in these subjects and they liked them, and so they made a special study of them and neglected the subjects they didn't care for. The subjects we should really take pains with are the ones we can't do and don't like, for these are the ones we most require to study, and if we neglect them we shall become one-sided.

I once knew a girl who went to a Scottish University. There was one subject she disliked, but circumstances obliged her to make a study of it. It was the subject that was of most use to her in after-life.

So don't spoil your cake by overdoing some talents at the expense of others. Make the best of them all, and then you will be wholesome and good all round.

3. We shall always be one-sided until Jesus turns us. There will be one side of our nature not developed —the best side. You have read about Jesus in the Bible and you have heard about Him in church and in Sunday school, but have you ever given Him a place in your lives? The Israelites knew a great deal about religion, but they didn't bring it into their daily lives.

"Ephraim is a cake not turned." What is spoiling your cake?

SMOKE.

Smoke out of the chimney.—Hos. xiii. 3.

THAT is a thing that nobody likes. Many people are fond of smoke out of a pipe, but nobody cares for smoke out of the chimney—especially when it is in the wrong place and comes down the chimney instead of going up. Smoke is dirty and disagreeable and harmful. It covers our tables and chairs and cushions with specks of soot, and it makes us cough and choke.

1. I think smoke is one of the lesser worries of life, and so I am going to take it to-day as a picture of the little frets and bothers and disagreeable things that come our way. These are the things that come to us every day. We are in a hurry to get to school; we pull off a button or break a bootlace; we have to wait till the button is sewed on or the lace replaced; and so we are late for school. Then the teacher scolds, and we have to stay after hours or write an imposition. Or perhaps our trouble takes another form. A tooth aches, or we cut our finger, or we lose some little thing we value, or a school friend is offended and won't speak to us. There are dozens of these little annoyances that are apt to come to us any day.

The question is, What are we to do about them?

(1) Well, when your chimney smokes, what do you do? You send for the sweep. Of course, you make sure first that your chimney is properly built, because some chimneys have a twist in them, or are too low, or have a loose brick inside, and no amount of sweeping will prevent their smoking. But when you have made sure that your chimney is properly built, the next thing you do is to see that it is kept clean.

Now, that is exactly what we must do with our little troubles and worries. Those that can be prevented or cured it is our business to prevent or cure, and a great many of them can be dealt with in this way. If you rise a few minutes earlier in the morning you will probably not pull off buttons or break laces; and supposing you do, you will have time to put them right. If your tooth aches, visit the dentist. If you lose your possessions, put them away more carefully in future. If one of your friends cuts you, speak to him and find out the reason. It is probably a little misunderstanding which can quite easily be cleared up. At any rate give him the chance of explaining. Friends are far too precious to be lost over a silly trifle. If you only take a little trouble about your troubles it is wonderful how many of them disappear.

(2) Learn to consume your own smoke. What does that mean? Well, you know when smoke comes out at the top of a chimney it looks like a black or grey cloud, but when it gets a little bit away it seems to disperse or vanish. Now, it doesn't really disappear

altogether. Some of it goes off in gases which mix with the atmosphere; the rest comes down in soot specks or hangs in the air and causes a fog. So in some large towns where there are many tall factory chimneys they have a plan whereby each chimney burns its own smoke.

And so I am going to say to you—burn your own smoke; and that just means—bear your own little troubles. Don't always be bothering other people with them and asking for sympathy and help. You will make yourself a nuisance, and nobody will want to know you. If things are not just as you would like them, then make the best of them as they are; but don't worry others about every little quarrel you have, and every little bump you give your head, and every little difficulty you meet.

There was once a little girl of four whose mother had met with a bicycle accident and was badly bruised. She asked her mother if she had been hurt, and when mother replied, "Yes, dear, dreadfully," Violet said, "Well, Mummy, when you don't *fink* of what you don't like, it seems to go away. That's what I find."

Try that plan instead of complaining. Try not to think of the things you don't like. It is wonderful how many of them will seem to go away.

2. But it is not only things that are a trouble, people can be a nuisance too. There are some boys and girls who are a trouble to everybody. They always seem to be getting into somebody's black books,

and they are just like smoke out of the chimney—a bother to everybody.

Well, if there are any boys and girls like that here, I want to remind them of the proverb which says that there is no smoke without fire. Smoke is not a good thing in itself, but it is a sign of something good, for when we see smoke we know that somewhere there is a spark of fire; and fire is a good friend, who warms us, and cheers us, and cooks our food.

And there is good in the "smoky" people too. Somewhere underneath that black disagreeable exterior there is a fire burning. The only mistake they are making is that they are burning in the wrong way. For smoke is really wasted fuel, and scientists tell us that if we knew how to burn a fire properly there would be no smoke.

Nothing is really "good for nothing." You may be constantly getting into scrapes, and people may treat you as if you were no good. But God knows better. He knows that you have the making of something fine in you, and if you will let Him take you in hand, then out of the smoke He can make a beautiful, glowing fire.

HOW TO BE SORRY.

Rend your heart, and not your garments.—Joel ii. 13.

"REND your heart, and not your garments." That sounds strange advice! Some of you know plenty about rending your garments, and I expect mother knows more than plenty about mending them. But that doesn't explain the text. What did the prophet Joel mean when he advised people to tear their hearts and not their clothes?

Well, in the East they have lots of customs which we think strange, just as in the West we have lots of customs which an Eastern would consider strange. One of these ancient customs was to tear or rend the clothes to show grief, horror, or dismay. It must have been rather an expensive way of showing grief, you think. Yes, it does sound rather wasteful to our ears, but then we look at things with different eyes, and to the Jews it was a way of proving how deeply they were moved.

Then, if it was a usual custom to show grief in this way, why did the prophet tell the people to rend their heart instead of their garments? And what did he mean by "rending the heart"? To understand we must go back a little.

The people of Judah, to whom the prophet spoke, had been going through a terrible experience. They had been visited by a plague of locusts, and the corn and the vines and the fruit-trees had been eaten bare, so that there was left no food for either man or beast. To add to the horror of it all a drought had accompanied the plague, and the rivers had dried up and the ground had become burnt like a brick. It was very terrible; but Joel told the people of Judah that they deserved it all. God had sent the plague and the drought to punish them for their sins. And Joel pleaded with them to repent of these sins—not merely outwardly, by rending their garments as a sign of grief, but inwardly, by being sorry in their hearts. He urged them to turn to God with penitent hearts, and God, he said, would pardon their sins, and perhaps remove the plague.

It seems to me that often when we say we are sorry we are merely rending our garments instead of our heart. We are sorry to all outward appearance, but we don't care a bit at heart. We say, "Oh! Sorry!" in an offhand sort of way, and we are really anything but sorry.

Once I knew a little girl whose elder sister had snatched away from her her favourite doll. She was a fond mother, and she didn't stop to argue the matter. She hit her sister a hard blow, and nurse caught her doing it. Nurse didn't ask who was to blame; she vigorously shook the doll's mother, set her in the

corner with her face to the wall, and told her to stay there till she was sorry. Half an hour passed and nurse asked if she were sorry now. "No!" was the decided reply, "I'm not." At the end of another half-hour nurse repeated the question, and still dolly's mama said, "No." "Ah, well," said nurse, "if you won't apologize, and say you are sorry, you must just remain where you are." "Oh!" said the mite, "I'll say *I 'pologize*, if you like, but I won't say *I'm sorry*, for I'm still glad I did it."

That little woman was perfectly sincere and truthful. She knew the difference between *saying she was sorry*, and *feeling sorry*, and she would not tell a lie even to get out of an uncomfortable corner. She wouldn't pretend what she didn't feel.

I'm afraid many people are content with pretending. But I don't want you to be one of those. I want you to be sorry with your heart as well as with your tongue. Being sorry with the tongue is only "rending the garment," but being sorry with the heart is "rending the heart."

Now, I think you will find that what we mostly have to be sorry for is one of two things—either saying or doing something to wound another, or persisting in some bad habit or fault.

1. *We have to be sorry for hurting someone.* How are we to be heart sorry for that? We are heart sorry when we not only apologize for the wrong but try to make up for it in some way, try to pay back in

kindness an unkindness. Grown-up people call this "reparation," and it is a good name, for it means repairing as far as possible the damage you have done. And don't be content with a little reparation. Try how big a one you can make.

2. *We have to be heart sorry for our bad habits,* such as laziness or untruthfulness or selfishness or hot-temperedness—any fault in fact that we know is wrong, yet persist in. And how are we to be sorry for a bad habit? Why, by stopping it! It is no use feeling a pang of sorrow at the moment and saying, "I'll not do it again," and then doing it the very next opportunity.

A gentleman once asked in a Sunday school in America what was meant by the word "repentance." A little boy raised his hand, "Please, sir, being sorry for your sins." A little girl also raised her hand. "Well," said the gentleman, turning to her, "what do you say?" "Please, sir, it's being sorry enough to quit."

Yes, that's it! Repentance is being sorry enough to quit—to stop doing the wrong, and to try with all your might and main never to do it again.

I won't promise you that it will be easy. In fact, I can tell you that it will often be extremely difficult. But then the difficult things in life are the things best worth doing. And I'll tell you this for your encouragement—the oftener you succeed, the easier you will find it.

HOLD YOUR TONGUE!

Hold thy tongue.—Amos vi. 10 (AV).

I AM sure you will think I have chosen a very rude text. It is a thing your mother doesn't like to hear you say, so I hope you won't go home and say to her, "Oh, Mother, the minister told us to hold our tongue. He preached about it. So it must be all right to say it." Well, the reason why the minister chose this text was not because he thought it was very polite, but because he knew you would remember it. (It's easy to remember a thing you should forget. Isn't it?) And if you remember the text, perhaps you will remember a little bit of the sermon too.

I don't need to explain the meaning of this text. You all know what it means only too well, and sometimes you haven't been at all pleased when you have been told to do it. And yet those who know how and when to hold their tongue have learned something very precious indeed.

Some of the older boys and girls can tell me who Socrates was. They know that he was a Greek philosopher and teacher. Well, one day a talkative young man came to Socrates to learn how to be an orator.

(An orator, you know, is one who speaks in public and has the power to sway vast audiences.) And what do you think Socrates said to this youth? He told him he would have to charge him double fees because he would be obliged to teach him two sciences—how to speak, and how to hold his tongue.

Now, there are some people in the world who need to be taught how to speak, but there are a great many more people who need to be taught how to hold their tongue. And if all these people were silent the world would be a very much quieter, as well as a very much happier, place.

There is a proverb which says that "speech is silvern, but silence is golden," and so I want to talk to you this morning about three of these golden silences.

1. The first golden silence is the *discreet silence.* Don't be a chatterbox. When people talk much it does not always mean that they are very wise. Don't go running about discussing other people's affairs. If anybody tells you a secret remember that a secret is sacred, and don't go telling it to the next boy or girl you meet. Remember that those who confide in you are trusting to your honour, and if you give away a secret you are giving away something that is not your own. You are doing something that is both mean and dishonourable.

Above all, don't chatter about the secrets of home. Don't tell every other boy and girl what is happening

in your family circle. Long ago the white rose was chosen as the emblem of silence, and in the centre of the roof of the ancient dining-halls a white rose used to be carved. Why do you think it was put there? It was to remind all those who dined under it that they were to regard as sacred anything that was said or done there, and that they were not to publish abroad what they saw and heard. There is always an invisible white rose over the centre of your home, and it tells you that you are not to give away the secrets of home to the world.

2. The second golden silence is the *charitable silence.* Don't be a slanderer. If you hear another boy or girl being run down, don't join in. I don't know why it gives some people a particular pleasure to pick somebody else to bits, but it does. Well, don't help with the picking. If you can say any good about the victim, say it, but if you can't, then hold your tongue. I know it isn't always easy, especially if you don't like the person whose faults are being discussed; but remember that to speak ill of another in his absence is one of the meanest and shabbiest things, and it does an immense amount of harm in the world.

3. The third golden silence is the silence of *self-control.* Don't be a spitfire.

There is a story told of how a missionary probably saved his life because he knew how to hold his tongue and keep his temper. That man was John Geddie, the

first missionary to the New Hebrides. On one occasion the natives, armed with clubs and spears, appeared in front of his house and began pulling the cocoanuts off his trees. Geddie knew that this was a declaration of war. After waiting till the savages had cooled down a little he approached the ringleader of the affair, but the sight of the missionary so enraged this man that he poured forth a torrent of abuse. Geddie listened quietly. He saw that one word from him would enrage the savage still further and would probably cost him his life, so he remained silent. At last after half an hour the man stopped through sheer exhaustion, and Geddie retired master of the situation because he had kept his temper and held his tongue.

If anyone abuses you or says anything unjust or unkind about you, the very best thing you can do is just to hold your tongue. It isn't easy. A wise person has said that "when our house takes fire, the first impulse is to go after a bucket of water. But if temper takes fire the first impulse is to throw on more fuel." When someone says something nasty to you, the first thing you want to do is to say something nasty back. That is just putting on more fuel. Don't you think it would be a good plan instead to go and look for a bucket of water to put out the fire? Shall I tell you the name of the best bucket? It is silence.

Remember that he who is silent is really the winner, because he has kept his temper. Remember that

angry words said in haste are often bitterly regretted. And remember, too, that when you control your tongue and refrain from answering back, you are following in the footsteps of Jesus "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again."

A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT.

Behold, a basket of summer fruit.—Amos viii. 1.

If any of you children chanced to go to Ayrshire in summer and found yourselves near a place called Alloway, you would meet tourists from all over the world, and see them, not only lingering by the banks of the river Doon, but trying to get a glimpse of a real Scottish ploughman. The explanation of this is that there once lived in the neighbourhood a ploughman whose name was Robert Burns. He was a man who had visions. He could not see even a wild daisy growing without dreaming about it, and thinking beautiful thoughts about it. When he wrote these thoughts down, they seemed full of music. Ever since his death, people have spoken of Robert Burns as the greatest of Scottish poets.

Sometimes I think that town children miss a great deal by not coming more into contact with the people who live always in the country and whose menfolk plough the fields and take care of the sheep; their lives are so full of interest, and they themselves are often so good.

The prophet Amos was just a farm labourer.

According to his own description, he was a herdsman and a dresser of sycomore trees, which means that he tended the sheep and the goats and took care of the sycomore fruit. In the course of his day's work he naturally had many opportunities of learning Nature's secrets and of hearing God speak. One day there came to him the command of the Lord to go and tell the people of Israel about their sins. And Amos went. Think of this plain man of the hills appearing among those who thought themselves very great and also very "grand." Amos, the herdsman, might seem rugged and uncouth, but you may be sure that his straight, simple words arrested the attention of his listeners. He took pictures from his outdoor life to enforce his arguments.

Once a vision came to him—"a basket of summer fruit." That sounds nice, doesn't it? I know that the thoughts of you boys and girls turn at once to strawberries, raspberries, and plums that have a beautiful fresh bloom upon them. But to Amos this vision did not speak of the deliciousness of ripe summer fruit, but of its decay. Probably there appeared to him just the common fruit among which he worked every day during the whole fruit season—the fig of the sycomore tree. It was one of those fruits that have to be eaten as soon as they are plucked. You know how soon even strawberries and raspberries lose their flavour when off the bushes.

The sycomore fig of Palestine was a peculiar growth.

It grew, not from the young, but from the older, branches of the tree. When the fruit was nearly ripe, it required to be punctured, or to have what is called its "eye" removed, for the fig was infested with an insect that gave it a bad taste. When the "eye" or top was cut off the insect escaped and the fruit then became sweet.

The vision of the ripe sycomore figs brought to Amos a vision of judgment for Israel. The sycomore fruit was ripe for decay; so, too, were the wicked people of Israel. They were God's children and had forgotten it. Their happiness and prosperity could—like the sweetness of the figs—endure only for a moment. The end was near.

It is right that your dream of a basket of summer fruit should bring to you only joy. God meant it to be so. For those of you who cannot have baskets of strawberries or raspberries He has made a lovely fruit garden. It is out in the country, in the woods and by the waysides. With some of you, summer reaches its fullest glory only when there comes a day of gathering ripe wild fruit. You love colour. You like the field flowers. But what happiness is to be compared with that of spending a day in the woods, or of wandering for hours among hedgerows, and at night going home with baskets full of Nature's good things? You don't all carry baskets, I know. I have met many a merry party returning from gathering blaeberries. The shy, happy smile, the little black

mouths, and the flagons told me what they had been about.

Does your "basket of summer fruit" speak to you of anything beyond the mere joy of gathering and eating it?

Many years ago a girl went blaeberrying with her brother. The wood was a long way from where they lived, and a schoolboy companion asked them to go to his home for tea. This boy's father was a crofter. What a quaint old house the girl was taken to! She looked up and saw the rafters in the kitchen. They were quite black. At first she wondered if she could enjoy her tea. Of course she did, and that very much. Afterwards, quite a number of people came into the kitchen and seated themselves in a circle. Bibles were handed round, then a psalm was sung to a very old-fashioned tune. After that came a chapter from the Bible—read verse about. Some of the readers read like little children: you know what I mean. Lastly, they all knelt down and an old grandfather prayed.

On the way home the girl felt that her day at "the blaeberries" had somehow not been quite so full of fun as usual. Now, when she is old and has forgotten the sweetness of the wild fruit, she looks back on that Saturday as one of the happiest in her life. There was sunshine; there were flowers; and her visit to the crofter's cottage made her think of God.

Boys and girls, God has given you these summer fruits to enjoy. They come with His blessing. They are part of His great plan of goodness for you. But don't forget, in the joy of gathering, to thank the great Giver for all His rich and splendid gifts.

A SIEVE.

A sieve.—Amos ix. 9.

Do you know a sieve when you see it? If you go to the kitchen and watch mother baking scones or a cake you will notice that she shakes or rubs the flour through a tin thing with a lot of criss-cross wires in the bottom of it. That is one kind of sieve or strainer. Then, if you are lucky enough to be spending your holidays at a farm and pay a visit to the dairy, you will see the farmer's wife straining the warm milk through what she calls a "hair sieve"—that is to say, a strainer made of hair-cloth. It keeps back any specks or hairs which might otherwise get into the milk. That is another kind of sieve.

Well, the sieve of which our text speaks was like neither of these. It was more like the riddle which the gardener uses when he wants to separate small stones from a heap of earth. It was more like that, and yet it was not quite the same, for the sieve of the Bible was a sieve for sifting corn, and when Amos wrote about it 2700 years ago it was made in the same way as the corn sieve used in Palestine to-day. It is a hoop of wood with a meshwork of strips of camel-hide. These are fastened into the hoop when

they are new, and as they dry they shrink and grow tight, so that the result is a splendid article for sifting corn.

You see in Palestine they had, and still have, no threshing machines such as we know—machines which take in sheaves at the top and pour out separate heaps of grain and straw at the bottom. The threshing machines were rather like toboggans with sharp iron teeth or rollers. These were harnessed to oxen, and the oxen tramped round and round in a circle over the corn which had been unbound and laid on the threshing-floor. These threshing-wagons cut up the straw and separated the grain from the stem. Then the chopped straw and the grain and the chaff were all collected and set aside in a heap till the wind rose in the evening. When it blew the workers tossed the mixture high in the air with wooden forks or shovels. The breeze carried the light chaff ten to fifteen feet away, the straw settled at a shorter distance, and the heavy grain fell almost close at hand. To make matters surer, the grain was lastly shaken in a corn sieve. And so we come back to our text.

I expect you have all heard somebody say at some time or other, "My memory is a perfect sieve." Indeed, perhaps your father or mother has said to you, "Really, child, I don't know what is to be done with you! Your memory's like a sieve." Well, it seems rather hard on the poor sieve to compare a bad memory to it. In fact, it is most unfair, for the sieve keeps what it ought to keep and throws away what it ought to throw

away. So I am going to say to you to-day, Try to have a memory like a sieve. Remember what is worth remembering and forget what should be forgotten.

1. What are some of the things we should keep in our sieve of memory?

I once read of a man who had such a marvellous memory that he could walk down one side of a long street in Leeds and up the other and could then repeat in order the names and signs over every shop. That is one kind of remembering, but it is not the kind of remembering that I wish for each of you. What I wish for you is the memory that remembers the noble stories you read or hear, the kindnesses that are done to you, the love that your friends give to you, the happy days that come to you, and the blessings that God showers on you. Our memory for lessons may be bad, and we may be dunces at French or geography, but we can all be clever at remembering things like that.

2. The sieve throws away what is worthless to it. I want your sieve of memory to throw away all that is unworthy of remembrance.

A little girl was once asked, "What is memory?" "Oh," she replied, "that's the thing that I forget with." I want your memory to be sometimes the thing you forget with. I want you to make it forget all the horrid stories and the unkind remarks about others that your ears may have heard. I want you to make it forget all the injuries that have been done to you,

all the things that you have felt sore about. What would you think of a man who stuffed a pillow with thorns instead of feathers and insisted upon sleeping on it? You are doing something like that when you refuse to forget the slights or wrongs that have been done you.

You have heard people say, "I may forgive, but I cannot forget." I don't want you to be like that. I want you both to forgive *and* to forget. Forgiving and not forgetting is man's way; but forgiving ***and*** **forgetting is God's way. Make it yours.**

WHO'S TO BLAME?

In the day that thou stoodest on the other side (RVm "aloof") . . . thou wast as one of them.—Obad. 11.

It happened in a little town in one of the Western States of America on the 4th of July—the day on which Americans commemorate their Independence.

It was evening. The speeches and celebrations were over, and a group of well-dressed boys had collected to build and light a bonfire. When the flames had caught they gathered round the fire to warm themselves, for the night was chilly.

Now, the cheery fire had attracted a little outsider. He was not well dressed like those other boys. His clothes hung in rags, his cap had a big hole in it, and his feet were guiltless of shoes or stockings. At first he hesitated on the outside of the group, but he was cold and hungry, and the kindly glow drew him on until at last he stood close to the fire.

Unfortunately at that moment the eyes of a big rough lad, the bully of the party, fell upon him. "Hullo, Tatters," he called, "what are you doing here?" The urchin tried to make his escape, but it was too late. With two great strides the bully was beside him. "Well, well," he said, "you're too fine

entirely! Bare feet, and what a cap! Don't you know it's just fit for roasting?" And with one blow he knocked the cap into the middle of the flames.

A few of the boys tittered, one said faintly, "Oh, Jim, that's mean!" but none of them made any attempt to intervene.

Rags and Tatters slunk off to a neighbouring doorstep, where he sat down and drew his ragged sleeve across his eyes to wipe away the tears that would come.

Meanwhile, from a window just above the doorstep, an indignant little person had been watching the whole scene. When the ragamuffin sat down on the steps below, her mind was made up. First she hunted for an old cap belonging to her brother. Then she ran to the kitchen and begged some sandwiches and buns from the cook. Next she put the eatables inside the cap, added a bright silver dollar of her very own, and lowered the small bundle by a string from the window over the steps. The small boy looked up in astonishment, saw the face at the window, ejaculated an awkward "Thank you, mum!" and ran off with his booty.

Just then a voice behind the little girl said, "Whatever are you doing?" She turned to see her brother, who had formed one of the group round the fire. "Oh, Guy," she asked, "how *could* you do it?" And Guy replied, "Do what? It was Jim Gregg who knocked his cap into the fire. *I* didn't do anything, nor did any of the others either."

No, that was just it. They didn't do anything.

They just stood aloof, like the people in our text, when they might have helped. For that is what the prophet blamed the people for.

He was addressing his words to the Edomites, who were cousins of the Israelites. They were descended from Esau, just as the Israelites were descended from Jacob, and you know that Jacob and Esau were brothers. Well, the enemy had come down and laid Jerusalem waste. He had killed the Israelites or carried them away captive, and the Edomites had stood and looked on. They hadn't done anything to help their brothers in distress. They had just let things take their course. And the prophet says a very hard thing to them. He says, "In the day that thou stoodest aloof . . . thou wast as one of them," and he means, "Because you didn't do anything to help, because you just stood on one side, you were really siding with the enemy."

There are a lot of comfortable people in the world who imagine that because they are not willingly *doing* anybody else active harm, because they are not *wishing* anybody else harm, therefore they are all right. But that is not enough. If there is wrong going on around them and they are not doing their part to stop it, then they are placing themselves on the side of those who are doing the wrong. And this applies to the boys and girls just as much as to the grown-ups.

A weaker boy is being bullied in your presence. You wouldn't go the length of tormenting him yourself,

in fact, you really don't approve of what is being done, but you are afraid of being laughed at if you interfere; and, besides, it's really none of your business. So you stand aloof.

Another girl's character is being pulled to bits in your presence. You know that the things that are being said are unkind and unfair and untrue, but you are afraid of risking you own popularity by contradicting them, or you have a personal grudge against the girl. So you stand aloof.

A bad story is told before you or a nasty joke is made. But you are afraid that you will be thought a prig if you protest. And so you stand aloof.

Boys and girls, will you listen to the story of one who was not afraid to stand on the side of right and who grew up to be one of the finest missionary heroes of modern times?

His name was John Coleridge Patteson, but the boys at Eton called him "Coley" for short. He was famed for his athletic prowess, especially in cricket, and he ultimately rose to the coveted position of Captain of the Eton Eleven. On one occasion he won the game for his school in the annual match against Harrow at Lord's by putting on fifty runs and completely breaking the neck of the Harrow bowling.

"Coley" was fond of fun and as jolly as any of the boys, but he couldn't stand any kind of coarseness and nastiness. Now, the custom had grown of singing rather objectionable songs at the annual dinner of the Cricket Club, and after Patteson had passed into the

Eton Eleven he was present at a dinner where one of the boys sang a questionable ditty.

"Coley" immediately called out, "If that doesn't stop I shall leave the room"; and as the singer continued, he jumped up and went out. Next he intimated to the captain his intention of leaving the Eleven unless an apology was forthcoming from the delinquent. Now, "Coley" was too good a bat to lose, so the captain obliged the offender to make the apology, and as long as Patteson remained in the Eleven there were no more nasty songs at the annual dinner.

You will not be surprised to hear that Coleridge Patteson grew up to be as fearless a man as he had been a boy. He became missionary bishop to the savages of the South Sea Islands. Many a thrilling escape and adventure he had, but he never turned back, and at last he was murdered by the natives in the year 1871.

It isn't the "softies" or the prigs that stand up for the true and right things. It is the heroes of undaunted courage.

And, boys and girls, have you noticed one thing? Have you noticed who were the people to whom Christ spoke His sternest words? It wasn't to the publicans and sinners; it wasn't to the Samaritans. It was to the priest and the Levite who thought themselves too good to interfere with evil, who passed by on the other side.

PAYING THE FARE.

He paid the fare thereof.—Jon. i. 3.

A SHIP bound for Tarshish in Spain was just weighing anchor in the harbour of Joppa when a little flustered man, very much out of breath, tumbled on board. "Here, my man," said the captain, "what do you mean by boarding my boat like this? Don't you know it costs something to go for a pleasure trip? If you want to come along you must pay the fare." "Certainly, certainly," replied the little man, taking out his purse. "I will pay whatever is just and right. Only, please take me as far west as you can." So Jonah paid the fare to Tarshish.

I want you to notice two things about this little incident. First, Jonah paid the fare and that was right. He was an honest man and paid his debts. But, second, Jonah paid the fare to go to Tarshish and that was wrong. Shall I tell you why? Because God had told him to go to Nineveh, which was in exactly the opposite direction, and Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. He was really trying to run away from God.

So you see it is possible to do quite right things in a

way that makes them quite wrong. For instance, some of you boys are keen on cricket or football, and you mean to stick in till you are captain of your eleven or of your team. Now, that is a good ambition. Cricket and football are splendid games. They will develop your muscles, they will make you quick and alert, they will help you to be manly and unselfish, and to "play the game." But if you run off to cricket or football when you should be tussling with the *pons asinorum* or grinding Latin verbs, then you are making a right thing wrong.

I knew a boy once who could play the penny whistle to perfection. Everyone was charmed with his performances; but he used to sit on the top of his summer-house tootling away when he should have been writing home exercises. He was paying the fare to go in the wrong direction.

One thing more I want you to remember. It is better to *lose* your fare than to run away from God. Jonah found that out. He never reached Tarshish. In the end of the day he went to Nineveh instead.

Let me tell you two stories which may help you to understand this.

Last century there lived in Stockholm a magnificent singer. Her name was Jenny Lind, and she was famous all the world over. Her voice was as pure and sweet as the voice of a nightingale, and she herself was as pure, and sweet, and true as her voice. Jenny was brought up on the stage. She acted first when she

was only ten, and her acting came to be as famous as her singing. She always tried to lift up her profession, to make it noble and good. And yet before she was thirty she gave up acting altogether, and so cut short what her friends regarded as a splendid career. Many people were curious as to her reason for renouncing the stage. She herself once gave it in a few words.

A friend found her one evening sitting on the seashore, with a Bible on her knees, looking out into the glory of a sunset. And she asked the singer the sore-vexed question, "How was it that you ever came to abandon the stage at the very height of your success?" Quietly Madame Lind replied, "When every day it made me think less of this"—she laid her hand on the Bible—"and nothing at all of *that*"—she pointed out to the sunset—"what else could I do?"

The other story is about a celebrated painter called Barry. When Barry was a young man living in Dublin he got mixed up with some very wild companions. One night when he was returning from an evening's riot, a great light broke on his conscience. He saw himself as he was, and he resolved to live a better life. He saw, too, that the only way to begin was to put temptation out of his way. He must rid himself of the means which gave him the chance of these excesses. So he threw all his money into the Liffey. Thereafter he devoted himself to his profession and lived a noble, upright life.

And so, boys and girls, it is better, infinitely better, to give up anything that comes between us and God, even though it means a big sacrifice. We shall never regret it. It is better, far better, to lose the fare than to run away from God.

FALSE WEIGHTS.

A bag of deceitful weights.—Mic. vi. 11.

"SIXTEEN ounces one pound, fourteen pounds one stone!" Why is fourteen pounds called a stone? For the very good reason that weights in olden days were mostly made of stone. The Babylonians and Hebrews used stone weights, and some of these are in existence to this very day. They are not large weights like our stones, but tiny ones about the size of a lump of sugar, and shaped rather like the button mushrooms you pick up in the fields—rounded on the top and cut off sharp below. Others are like shuttles or melon seeds, only about twice as big as an ordinary melon seed. And each is stamped with the name of the weight which it represents.

The merchant of Bible days (who was a travelling merchant, by the way) carried his weights about with him in a bag made of strong cotton or leather. He placed the stones in one scale and the silver which he was being paid in the other, and he told his customer if it weighed enough: for you must remember that money, in Old Testament days at least, was just lumps of silver, and you gave so much weight of silver for what

you wanted to buy. That is why we read of Abraham's weighing out four hundred shekels of silver, "current money with the merchant," as the price of the field in which he buried his wife, and that is why we read of Joseph's being sold for "twenty pieces of silver."

Now, naturally, with knocking against each other in the bag the weights soon got worn down, and then it was the merchant's duty to replace these by others; just as our grocers have to lay aside any light weights when the Inspector of Measures, who comes round every year to test them, says they are under standard weight. I am sorry to say, however, that as there was no Inspector of Measures in those days, and it was left to the merchants' own conscience, many of them kept their worn-down stones. And some were even so cunning as to keep two sets—a set for buying, and a set for selling—so that they cheated twice over. That is why the Bible is so full of warnings about "divers" or different weights, and that is why our text speaks of "a bag of deceitful weights."

This morning I want to speak to you about two deceitful weights. They are not grocer's weights, but you are sure to meet them sooner or later; and when you do, I want you to be able to say, "Ah! I've heard of you before. You are a false weight. I'll have nothing to do with you." But, first, I must explain a little, and to do so let me tell you a story.

In the days when James I. sat on the throne of Great Britain and Ireland, a certain English ambassador was sent to India to visit the court of Shah Jehangir, the reigning Great Mogul and Sovereign of Hindustan. Whilst on this visit the ambassador saw a curious sight. The Shah's birthday came round, and on that day, as was the yearly custom, a huge pair of scales was hung from a stand erected in the courtyard of the palace. Into one pan of the scales stepped the Mogul, clad in his costliest raiment and adorned with all his jewels. Into the other were piled gold, silver, precious stones, rare silks and embroideries, also all kinds of dainties and delicious fruits. When the scales balanced, and the weight of the goods equalled the weight of the Shah, he stepped down, and the goods were distributed as gifts among the people.

Now, we may not realize it, but every one of us weighs himself against something, just as surely as did that Eastern monarch. And some of us weigh ourselves against good weights, and others of us throw ourselves away by placing false or worthless weights in the scales. Some people give themselves away for love, others for learning. They think it is worth while giving all their lives for these. But a great many people throw themselves away for two deceitful weights, and it is against these I want to warn you.

1. The first deceitful weight is *wealth.* Lots of folk

sell themselves for gold. They give their lives for money or the possessions that money brings. Now, if anybody ever tells you that money is the best thing in life, don't believe him. Money is not to be despised, of course, nor is it to be wasted; but when it comes to a case of a man against money, man is never to be compared with gold. And yet some people sell their souls as well as their bodies for a pile of yellow coins which can buy for them fine clothes and houses and lands, but which can never buy for them the best things — health, happiness, contentment, and love.

One of the world's greatest and most successful millionaires was congratulated by a friend on his vast possessions. Said the friend, "With all you have you must be the happiest man in the world." The millionaire looked for a moment as if he did not understand, and then he exclaimed sadly, "Happy! *me* happy!" That was all he said, but it told his story. The gold in the other half of his scale he had found to be a false weight.

2. The second false weight is *position*. There are many foolish people who sell themselves for position. They say that a high place in the world is the chief good. So they think of nothing but getting on and getting up. They make up their mind to climb. They push aside and trample on their fellow-men. They toady to those above them and snub those immediately beneath. As they ascend they cut their old friends.

Did I say "ascend"? Alas! they may think they are ascending, but every step up is in reality a step down; for in the mad struggle for place and power they are losing all their nobler and gentler nature. They are trampling on their better selves as well as on their fellow-men. And they are forgetting that God does not care whether they are kings or peasants. Both are exactly alike in His eyes—so long as they are good men. They forget, too, that God's own Son came to earth and lived and worked for nearly thirty years—a carpenter.

Did you ever hear of Ian Maclaren, the great preacher and writer? Perhaps you older boys and girls may have read his books. When he was a little fellow he was staying with an uncle in the country. He went to church on Communion Sunday and was greatly impressed by one of the elders, an old man with white hair and a beautiful saintly face, who was dressed in black in the reverent Scottish fashion. Next day the little chap was playing on the road, and to his amazement he came upon the same old man, in rough, patched clothes, breaking stones by the road-side. The boy was so astonished that he ran home to ask his uncle about it. "Yes," said the uncle, "that is old John. He is only a poor man and a stone-breaker, but he is the most Christlike man I have ever known."

Boys and girls, let us make no mistake about the weights for which we sell ourselves. Do we choose wealth? Then let us choose the true riches. Let

us be rich towards God, rich in thoughts and deeds of love and self-sacrifice. Do we choose position? Let it be the highest position—the position of a servant of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

GROW YOUR THORNS IN A HEDGE.

A thorn hedge.—Mic. vii. 4.

A THORN hedge! That is something we all know. They are as common as blackberries in England, and though the fields and roads in Scotland are bounded mostly by stone walls or "dykes," still there are not a few hedges to be seen as well. Some of us think a thorn hedge would be improved if it had no thorns. At least, if it were thornless we'd have fewer tears in our clothes and fewer scratches on our hands. What would you think if you lived in Palestine where the plants which bear thorns can grow them one and a half inches long? These are thorns you could call thorns.

Yes, and besides growing long thorns Palestine grows many thorns, so many for its size that it has been styled "the land of thorns." If I should try to describe to you all its different kinds of thorn bushes it would take me the whole forenoon, for it has about two hundred varieties. Some of them are climbers—rather like the blackberry or bramble, but their fruit is red and bitter. They grow in the salt marshes, and the Arabs call them "wolf's grapes." Some are

prickly burrs which get into the shoe or between the bare foot and the sandal. They have a Latin name which means "tribulation," and *it suits them.* Others are like gigantic thistles ten to fifteen feet tall. Others still have long, stiff spines that tear a gaping wound. Some are a kind of prickly pear. Others, again, have gummy leaves, and stems and branches of these last are used by the natives to sweep the floors of their houses. They are as good as a mop, for insects and particles of dust stick to the gum.

The thorns flourish on every hillside and on every waste piece of ground. There are whole thickets of them as well as scattered bushes. They are as plentiful as heather on a heather moor—and you know how plentiful that is.

Now, you would never choose thorns as a meal, but the amazing thing is that the goats and camels of the Holy Land consider them delicacies. They make straight for the very spikiest of them, and chump them up with great gusto. The mouths of these creatures are lined with particularly tough skin, and that is how they manage it.

The thorns are useful to man too. They are cut with a reaping-hook and taken to the lime-kiln to help to burn lime. But perhaps the best use to which they are put is to make a hedge. Thorn hedges are of two kinds—growing and dead. The live thorn hedge is made by planting in a furrow slips of thorn bushes. These slips spring up into thriving plants, and in less than no time they form

a splendid thick hedge. The other kind of hedge is formed of cut branches of thorns. They are laid round a patch of land to a height of several feet, and a thickness of two to three feet. Thorn hedges are usually set round vineyards and sheepfolds to keep out robbers and beasts of prey, who might steal the grapes or kill the sheep. Against such there is no better protection.

Boys and girls, I want you to turn all your thorns into hedges. I want you to put your thorns to the best use. What do I mean by your thorns? Well, there are several things I might call your thorns, but what I am specially thinking of is your little hot tempers. You know we all have tempers. Some of us have bigger tempers than others, just as some bushes have crueller, sharper spines.

Now, thorns are one of two things: they are either a hindrance or a protection. They either catch your clothes and scratch your face and hurt you horribly, or they act as protectors to keep off harm from what they are set to guard. What are you going to do with that thorny temper of yours? Are you going to let it hurt everyone that comes in contact with it? Or are you going to plant it in a hedge, trim it neatly, and use its thorns only for defence? Are you going to make it a protector of the weak? Are you going to use it only when a boy smaller than yourself is being ill-treated, or when some poor dumb animal is being tormented, or when some nasty story is

being told, or when some dishonourable deed is being proposed? Then is the time to use your thorny temper. Let it prick hard then. Temper is splendid when you use it only on occasions such as these. It is no longer temper. It is what is called "righteous anger." Christ Himself — the gentle Christ — knew such anger. He spoke to the mean people and the cruel people and the false people words that wounded like thorns and stung like whips.

So grow your thorns in a hedge. Use your tempers only when you feel that God Himself would be angry. God gave us our tempers, but He meant us to use them wisely. When we make them protectors we are putting them to their noblest use.

EVEN A WORM WILL TURN (THE EARTH).

Worms of the earth.—Mic. vii. 17 (AV).

WHAT is your opinion about worms? Do you exclaim, "Ugh! Horrible creature!" when you meet one crawling over the garden path? Or are you like Charles Kingsley's little daughter who surprised and rather shocked a guest of her father's by crying out, "Oh, Daddy, look at this *delightful* worm!"

Now, of course, an earthworm may not be very lovely to look upon, but there's a very great deal to be said in its favour. To be quite frank, I doubt if the earth could get on at all if its worms came to a sudden end. They do such a useful and important work—these insignificant creatures—that they can't be done without. Suppose we take a good look at them and their work this morning.

I expect most of you have noticed that an earthworm's body is made of a great many rings—as a matter of fact, there are usually over a hundred of these. The head end is slightly pointed, and it has a cover or hood which projects over the worm's mouth. This hood is very sensitive, and with it the worm seizes leaves or other objects. The worm has neither

eyes nor ears, yet it can distinguish between light and darkness, and can hear a sound as slight as the tap of a bird's foot. A worm has no feet, but each ring of its body has four tiny bristles. These the creature can fix into the side of its burrow, and they help it to get along. As you know, it does its crawling by alternately elongating and contracting its body.

So much for its person! Now for its work! You may scarcely believe it, but the earthworm is the world's busiest and most hard-working ploughman. It turns over the soil more wonderfully than any plough, and it renews it and lets the air into it as well. It does this in three ways.

1. If the earth is soft it simply bores its way down, head first, and as it bores it produces from its body a sort of slime with which it coats the tunnel it is making. This slime hardens and keeps the earth together so that the tunnel does not fall in.

They say it was from watching and copying the methods of a worm that the man who built the famous Thames tunnel succeeded in preventing the tunnel from collapsing. Brunel—for that was his name—made a tube of steel which was driven into the earth and so kept it from falling down. Then between the tube and the earth he forced cement, which set and hardened as firm as a rock.

But to return to our worm! At the end of its tunnel it makes a sort of enlarged chamber or burrow,

its home, to which it returns when in danger from above. It plugs the surface opening of this tunnel with leaves, because, though worms like moisture, they don't like too much rain. It is apt to fill their burrow and drown them out.

These tunnels allow air to get into the soil. They make a road for the raindrops to reach the roots of plants, and they give the delicate roots themselves a ready-made path.

2. When the soil is hard, or when it is much matted—as with roots of grass—the worm sets to work in another way. It *eats* its way through the soil. Then it comes to the surface and ejects the soil in the form of worm-castings—these funny worm-shaped little coils of earth that we have all seen on a garden lawn. In passing the earth through its body the worm does two things—it extracts the vegetable and other nourishment it wants out of it, and it grinds it to powder. In this way the worm actually renews the surface of the earth, and the castings which it brings to the top make excellent growing soil for plants.

Charles Darwin, the famous scientist, was so interested in worms that he studied them for forty years and then wrote a book about them. He tells us that he collected and weighed the quantity of earth brought up to the square yard of soil in a year, and he found that it amounted to three and a half pounds. Those of you who are good at arithmetic can work

out a sum and see how many tons that means to the acre.

3. The third way in which the worm works is just as marvellous. It comes to the surface in the evening (it dislikes light), it keeps the end of its body in the ground and it sweeps the rest of it round in a circle gathering all it can seize. It selects the leaves it wants and carries them down to its underground burrow. There it tears them to shreds, and covers them with a fluid that makes them easily digested. Then it nibbles them at its leisure. These buried leaves form a rich vegetable mould which is a splendid plant food.

When you hear all these tales about the worm's usefulness do you wonder that it is considered a valuable creature? They say that in the Yoruba country in Africa, the natives think so much of the earthworm that when they decide to break up new soil for a farm the first thing they do is to look for its traces. If there are none the natives try another locality. They know it is no use attempting to farm where there are no worms.

I have kept what I think the most extraordinary fact about a worm to the last. It is this. If, by accident, a worm be cut in two, each half turns into a whole worm, the head part grows a tail, and the tail part grows a head.

Now I don't want all the small boys present to go

home and immediately start hunting worms that they may sever them in two. That would be no sport; it would be merely cruel and mean. But I do want them, and the girls too, to think about the fact, for it seems to me that the pluck of the worm which doesn't lose heart even when it has lost half of its being is worth imitating. It preaches a whole sermon to us, and its text is, "Never lose heart."

If your plans are spoiled, and your hopes wrecked, and you feel for the moment as if everything were going wrong, cheer up! Out of that one sad failure you may, like the worm, with God's help, make two grand successes.

HAPPY FEET.

He maketh my feet like hinds' feet.—Hab. iii. 19.

SOME of you girls are not a little proud of your feet. When you get a new pair of shoes you stick your feet well out in front of you and hope that others are noticing how nicely shod you are, how well tied your laces are, or how smart your buckles. And when you and your friends get together in a bunch and the talk happens to turn on boots, you are anxious to let everyone know that though you are tall for your age you take only size three.

Now it is a very natural thing to be proud of your feet. You began it at a very early age when, as a baby of a few months old, you held out your little feet for admiration when visitors asked, "Where's baby's pretty new shoes?" It is a natural thing to be proud of your small feet, but it is a more excellent thing, even although you take sixes and cannot boast a high instep, to see that your boots and shoes are always neat, that they are nicely polished, that the laces are tidily fastened, and that the heels are not down at the side. Even although you can't

afford many pairs of shoes and those you do have are patched, you can make the very best of them.

I once knew a girl called Nellie whose feet were her great sorrow. They were large and flat and badly shaped, and somehow she could not forget them; and a foolish remark of her father's would keep repeating itself in her brain. "Oh, any kind of shoes will do for Nellie! She has such ugly feet." If Nellie had only known it, her feet were the most beautiful feet in the family, for they were feet that were ever running errands for other people. They were feet that were always tiring themselves by doing deeds of love.

Our text to-day is about feet. The prophet Habakkuk said that God had made his feet "like hinds' feet." What did he mean? Well, if you have ever watched a deer springing over the heather or leaping from rock to rock on the hillside, you will know what he meant. He meant that his steps were light and springy and sure, like the feet of the fallow deer. They were swift and glad — Why? Because he knew that God loved him and was caring for him, and in return he loved and trusted God. And so his heart was full of joy, and the joy got into his steps.

As I said already, it is good to have small feet and it is better to have well-tended feet, but it is best of all to have feet like the prophet Habakkuk—feet

that are swift and joyful. The small feet may trip in life's journey, the well-tended feet may lag, but the feet like hinds' feet will spring along life's road all the day and all the way.

Did you ever notice in a city street the difference in people's walk? Some lift their feet as if they carried flat irons instead of feet. Others drag their feet as if they were fastened to the pavement by invisible chains. But some step so lightly that they seem hardly to touch the ground. You feel that if these people were about your age they'd be jumping and dancing for joy. They may be going to their work, or they may be going to amuse themselves, but whatever be their errand, they are stepping along briskly and gladly. And the secret of the light step is just the glad heart. The heart that loves its errand makes the feet that are swift and springy.

Three hundred years ago there lived in Rome a school of great painters and sculptors. These painters and sculptors have left us many wonderful paintings and glorious statues, but they have left us also a Latin phrase which they used to describe the spirit in which they did their work. They said they did it *con amore*. *Con amore*, with love, that is how they achieved such masterpieces.

Our work on earth here may be very humble, our name may never be heard of beyond our own little circle of friends, but yet we can be like these wonderful artists of old, we too can do our work,

we can play our games, we can serve God and our fellow-men *con amore.* Then joy will be in our hearts and gladness in our steps, and, like the Jewish prophet, our feet will be "like hinds' feet."

THE RIGHT KIND OF BANK.

He that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.—Hag. i. 6.

A FARMER'S wife once preached a sermon to a little girl. This is how it was. Katie — that was the little girl's name—had gone round with her one afternoon to gather the eggs. She could not understand why one egg was always left in the nest. "You see, my dear," said the farmer's wife, "hens will lay only where there are eggs already."

And then she preached her sermon. She told Katie how, when her father had any money to spare, he put it into the bank. "He believes in having a nest-egg," she added. "After a year, or perhaps two, when he goes to take some of his money out, he finds that it has grown into a bigger sum. He never takes it quite all out; he leaves his 'nest-egg.'"

Katie has a wee pocket; I see it bulging out; there are all sorts of things in it. Is there ever a hole in it? Did she ever put a lot of halfpennies into her pocket and rattle them and rattle them until somehow one hole was worn, and then another? If Katie didn't, I know a girl who did long before Katie was born. Her mother scolded her; but like a wise

mother she bought a tin bank to put the remaining halfpennies into, and said, "Here is a bank with a nest-egg in it."

Katie asked a great many questions about banks; that was how the rest of the sermon came to be preached. The farmer's wife told her that being careless at school was like putting what she learned into a pocket with holes in it. She would grow up not knowing things that would be a great gain to her, whereas if she were diligent she would constantly be getting wiser. And school knowledge was just like a nest-egg; if she had it she would want to know more.

Then if she grew up to be a kind woman, helping those about her, that was like putting something into God's bank. A day would come when she would find that there was treasure laid up in Heaven for her.

Boys have pockets too. Let them preach the same sermon to themselves, for their pockets very often have holes in them. I once heard a proverb that somehow I couldn't forget. "A rogue's purse is full of holes." There are no rogues here, but if that proverb is true there is an opposite to it. A good and wise man puts his treasure into a bag without holes. Earn all you can, save all you can, and then give all you can. Have a "nest-egg" in God's bank.

MEASURING LINES.

A man with a measuring line.—Zech. ii. 1.

THE other day when I was walking along a country road I saw two men carrying what looked like a huge tape measure. They laid it down on the ground, stretched it tight, and then the man who was in front made a little jotting in a notebook.

I daresay you have often seen men doing the same thing, and you know that they are road surveyors, whose business it is to measure the roads and see that they are kept in good order. Now measuring lines are very important things; we couldn't very well get along without them. So to-day I want to talk to you about these lines—how and when to use them.

There are three different kinds of things we try to measure.

1. First of all there are *the things we can measure.* And these are usually the things we *ought* to measure. We can measure money, and we ought to do that from time to time to make sure that we are not spending more than we have, to make sure also that we are not

spending too much on ourselves and giving too little away. We can measure our food, and mother knows what that meant when sugar was rationed and she had to count every spoonful that went into your tea. We can measure our time. If we are going in for an examination and have just an hour and a half to answer the paper, we can set aside so much time for each question. These are all things that we can measure and that it is wise to measure.

2. But, secondly, there are *the things it is difficult to measure*, and they are the things that we often measure wrong. Because, you see, we are so apt to measure people and things by what they look like instead of by what they are. Perhaps you will understand better if I tell you a story which I heard lately.

In a certain country district there lived a lonely farmer whom everybody thought very mean. He would give away nothing he could keep. When he was asked for a contribution for any charitable object he either gave nothing at all or a very shabby subscription. His clothes were worn and threadbare. He starved himself and he even starved his land. So by and by his acquaintances left him alone, and he lived his solitary life, year in, year out, with no one to care very much what happened to him.

Then one day his story leaked out. The farmer had once had a very dear friend who had done him a great

wrong. They had drifted apart and the friend had married. After some years the friend died, and it came to the ears of the farmer that he had died very poor. He had died very poor and had left a family of young children penniless and orphaned, for the mother had died previously. So, for the sake of the old friendship, the farmer took upon himself to bring up these children. He fed them, he clothed them, he educated them, until they were ready to go out into the world and earn their own living. But to do this he had to pinch and starve himself, for he was not a rich man. And when his acquaintances heard the story they were thoroughly ashamed, for the man they had counted mean was the most generous in the whole district.

So, boys and girls, be very, very careful with your measuring line when you apply it to other people. Try to get below the mere surface. Don't jump to the conclusion that people are mean because they have few pennies to give away. Don't imagine that people are ill-natured because they have spoken a sharp word to you. Perhaps they have some big worry to try their temper that you know nothing about. Don't conclude that people are tiresome when perhaps they are just tired. And remember, too, that it isn't always those who speak the biggest that do the most; it isn't always those who smile the sweetest that are the most sincere; it isn't always those who wear the finest clothes that have the noblest hearts.

I read a sort of fable the other day. It told how an angel was sent down to a certain village with a measuring rod. His business was to measure the people in the village and to crown as king or queen the one who came up to the required standard. He measured the minister, the schoolmaster, the squire, and many other well-known people, but they all failed to reach the standard. Then at last he picked out of the crowd a poor, shabby little woman. Nobody had ever thought very much about her, but they knew that she was always trying to do kind things and to help those who were in trouble. She alone of all that village reached the required standard, and there, before them all, the angel crowned her queen.

3. But, lastly, there are some things we *can't measure*, and these are usually the best things of all. Did you ever try to measure happiness? Did you ever try to measure your mother's love? Did you ever try to measure God's love? Ah, some people have tried to do that. They have measured God's love by the measure of their own miserable little hearts and they have made it less than the love of men. But God's love is immeasurable. It is deeper than the ocean, and wider than the universe, and higher than the heavens. It is underneath us, and round about us, and over us. It is so big and wide and tender that we can only begin to realize the least bit of what it is like.

Boys and girls, have you begun to realize what God's love is? Have you ever begun to think about it? Have you let a little bit of it into your hearts and into your lives? If you haven't done it yet, don't wait any longer. Do it now.

THE TRIFLES THAT COUNT.

Who hath despised the day of small things?—Zech. iv. 10.

To-day I want to tell you two stories. The first story is about a weed, and the second is about a flower.

1. Did you ever hear of the khaki weed? It is a great pest in some parts of South Africa. And how do you think it came by its strange name? Well, it was called the khaki weed because it was brought to South Africa at the time of the South African War. Before that time the weed was unknown in that country, but during the war great quantities of forage were brought from the Argentine, and among the forage were some seeds of this weed. Wherever the forage was unloaded the seeds blew about; and some of them liked the new ground and took root.

That was the beginning of it, but it was by no means the end. For the plant is one of those that stretch along the ground, and wherever a seed took root and grew the plant crept a little farther every day. To-day the weed has overgrown whole districts and has become such a nuisance

that the farmers are ordered to destroy it. And all because of a few mischievous seeds that were blown about.

2. The second story is about a flower. So far as I know it never was more than one little flower. It didn't spread like the khaki weed, and yet it did a tremendous lot of good all by itself.

It grew more than a hundred years ago, in the days when Napoleon Bonaparte was Emperor of France.

There were many men in France then who did not agree with the Emperor or approve of his conduct, and some of these men Napoleon threw into prison. Among them was a wise scholar called Charney.

Now Charney was a clever man, but he had made one big mistake. He had given up believing in God. He had been so long in prison that he thought God had forgotten him, as the Emperor had, and that He no longer cared for him. So he wrote on the wall of his cell, "All things come by chance." He was so unhappy that he did not believe there was a God who watched over and cared for His creatures here below.

But one day when Charney was pacing up and down his cell he saw a tiny green blade trying to push its way through the hard ground quite near the wall. It was a tiny plant. How it came there I don't know. Perhaps God just sent it. The

prisoner became interested in the little plant. It was the only living thing in the cell besides himself, and it became his friend and teacher. Day by day he watered it, and tended it, and watched it growing.

By and by a bud came on the plant, and presently the bud opened into a flower—a beautiful flower, white and purple and rose-coloured, with a white fringe round the edge.

Then Charney began to wonder and to think. He thought that if God could take so much care and trouble about a little prison flower, surely He must care for him. So he rubbed out the words he had written on the wall—"All things come by chance" —and in their place he wrote, "He who made all things is God."

Now in that great prison there was another prisoner whose little daughter used to visit him. And this little girl became acquainted with Charney. She found out about the flower and about Charney's love for it, and after that she often came to see it and the man who had befriended it.

One day she told the story of the flower to the jailer's wife, and the tale went from one to the other until at last it reached the ears of the beautiful Empress Josephine, Napoleon's wife. The Empress was very much interested. She was sure that a man who could care so much for a little flower could not have done anything very bad, and she persuaded her husband to set Charney free.

So at last Charney received his liberty. When he left the prison he took with him the little plant that had procured his release and, better still, had taught him to love and to trust God. And he planted it in his own garden and tended it ever after with the greatest love and care.

Now I don't need to say much about these two stories, but perhaps you have noticed that each, in its own way, tells us very much the same thing—not to despise little things.

Don't despise the little bad things.—They have a tremendous power for evil. Don't think it doesn't matter if you are just a little cross, just a little selfish, just a little mean, just a little untruthful or dishonest. Nobody ever started by being a big bit of any of them. These faults grow and spread like the khaki weed, and if we let them get big and strong it is almost impossible to root them out. The only safe way is to pluck them up when they are seedlings.

And *don't despise the little good things.*—They have a tremendous power for good.

God takes as much trouble to make a speck of dust as to make a universe, and Jesus taught men the value of small things—a mustard seed, a grain of corn, a lily, a sparrow, a little child.

Take trouble to do the little things well, even though it is only running an errand, or writing a

page in a copy-book. Once a boy at Rugby thought it did not matter how he wrote. Many men of genius, he said, wrote badly. And when he grew up he became an officer in the British Army and went out to fight in the Crimea. One day he copied an order so badly that it could not be properly read and was incorrectly given, and many lives were lost in consequence.

Once more, *don't despise the little opportunities* of being kind and doing good. Don't wait for the big ones to come along. Seize the small ones. Perhaps the big ones may never come your way, but the small ones may have big results. Remember the little prison flower. You can never tell where a good deed may end. You can never tell what a lot of good you may accomplish just by doing your duty and being helpful and loving.

Do what you can, being what you are;
Shine like a glow-worm, if you cannot like a star,
Work like a pulley, if you cannot be a crane,
Be a wheel greaser, if you cannot drive the train.

THE RIGHT KIND OF NOSE.

Ye have snuffed at it.—Mal. i. 13.

SOME people think it is very important to have a nice nose. Those of you who have read *Little Women* will remember that Amy was greatly distressed about her nose because it turned up, and that she wore a clothes-pin every night when she went to bed to try to improve the shape of it.

Now I expect the nose you have is the one that suits your face best, and nobody else's nose would suit you half so well. If your nose turns up of itself I'm afraid you will just have to keep it that way. But there is one kind of nose we should all avoid and *can* all avoid. It is the nose that we turn up of our own accord—the contemptuous, scornful nose.

That is the kind of nose that is referred to in the text. To "snuff" is just an old word that means to turn up your nose. The Israelites of Malachi's day were despising and slighting the worship of God. They were turning up their nose at it and the prophet condemns them for it.

Now there are two ways of "snuffing," and both

are bad and foolish. Some boys and girls turn up their nose at *things*. That is the first way. Some boys and girls turn up their nose at *people*. That is the second way.

Some boys and girls turn up their nose at *things*.

Here is a sad, true story which comes from Glasgow. A girl of twelve and a boy of fourteen were having supper together at a children's party. Said the maiden to the youth, "I wonder where these ices came from. They're not Hubbard's" (mentioning one of the best confectioners in Glasgow). Said the youth to the maiden, "No, and they're not Skinner's, for I'd know the flavour of Skinner's ices anywhere." "Ah!" said the maiden, "second-rate, I expect!"

That boy and girl fancied they were showing how superior they were, but they only succeeded in proving that they were ill-bred, and mean, and ungrateful.

Lockhart, who wrote the life of Sir Walter Scott, tells the story of how one day Scott rebuked his daughter Anne for turning up her nose at something. She had said she could not abide this thing—it was "vulgar." And her father asked her if she knew the meaning of the word "vulgar." He explained that it just meant "common," and then he went on to say that nothing that is common, except wickedness, can deserve to be spoken of in a tone of contempt.

Will you try to remember that? Nothing that is common, except wickedness, can deserve to be spoken of in a tone of contempt. Scorn the things that are

mean and base and unkind, but remember that it is God who sends us all our good gifts, and when we despise them we are really despising His goodness.

Some boys and girls turn up their nose at *people*. Well, I suppose you know what the boys and girls who do that are called. It is not a pretty name, but you may as well know it. They are called "snobs." It is worse to despise people than to despise things, because people have feelings and things have not.

I read a story the other day about a small girl who was travelling in a tramcar with her aunt. It was a busy time of day, and all the seats were occupied—when into the car came a washerwoman carrying a bundle of clothes. The aunt whispered to the little girl, "You had better get up, Annette, and let that woman have your seat; you can stand, and she has a heavy bundle." "'Deed an' I won't!" said Annette, and up went her nose in the air. "She's nothing but an old washerwoman!"

Now I fancy that little girl spoke as she did because she didn't take time to think. I don't believe she was a nastier little girl than most. She just hadn't used her imagination. If there were nobody to do our washing, then we could never have clean garments, or nice clean tablecloths, or sheets, or pillow-cases, or towels. And if there were nobody to do hard, rough work for us, we should be very badly off. There are a great many people who have

to get up very early, and work very hard, and wear plain, rough clothes in order that we may have comfort and ease, and the least we can do is to be kind and polite to them and help them all we can.

Never look down on anyone for wearing shabby clothes, or living in a small house, or speaking ungrammatically. Remember it is God who has put you where you are, and because you chance to have been born in a villa while some other children have been born in a slum, that is no reason why you should despise them. Rather you should be all the kinder to them and try to make up to them for the things they have missed. Remember, too, that some of God's saints, some of the bravest and best men and women who have ever lived, have worn plain garments and lived in humble circumstances. Clothes and houses are just outer husks; the real man or woman lives inside.

Now I want to give you two reasons why you should not snuff at things or people.

And the first is because *it shows that you have a little mean mind and a poor shrivelled heart.* When people snuff at things it is generally because they think themselves superior and great, and they want everybody else to see it. If they only knew it, they are just showing how inferior and small they are.

But the second reason is the biggest, and it is the one I want you to remember. It is because *Jesus never did it.* He never despised anything or anybody

and the only thing He ever spoke of in words of righteous scorn was this very sin of despising. "Take heed," He said, "that ye despise not one of these little ones," and Jesus' "little ones" were not only the children, but any who were weak, or poor, or sinful. And He spoke a parable specially to "certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others."

Nothing was ever too small for Jesus to notice—the sparrow that was sold for the fifth part of a farthing, the lilies of the field, the grain of mustard-seed. And nobody was ever too bad or too poor to be received by Him. Do you know why? Do you know Jesus' secret? It was because He loved so much. He loved all God's beautiful world, and so He reverenced it. He loved all God's poor, weary, sin-stained children with a tenderness that sought to heal their hurts, and lift their burdens, and comfort their distresses. Boys and girls, if your hearts are full of love you will have no room for contempt.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are **Exod. xxiii. 9; 1 Sam. iii. 10; Ps. xxiv. 4 (2), xxxiv. 13; Prov. vi. 13; Luke vi. 41; 1 Pet. iii. 4, v. 5.**

FOLLOW THE GLEAM.

Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him.—Matt. ii. 2.

THERE are some stories that we never grow tired of, are there not? I expect most of you have books that you have read over and over again, and yet you are just as fond of them as the first time you opened them. Among the stories we never weary of are those two beautiful tales of Christ's infancy—the story of how the shepherds, watching their flocks under the cold stars, heard the angel's song; the story of how these strange Wise Men came from the mysterious East to worship the baby King. And so to-day, once more, we are going to hear the old, old story of the brave Wise Men who followed the guiding star.

We are told very little about these Wise Men, but we can guess a good deal. In the margin of the Revised Version of the Bible there is a little note which tells us that the Greek word translated "Wise Men" is "Magi." Now the Magi were originally Persian priests who devoted themselves to the study of the stars and also to many forms of magic. Later the name was given to wise men of other nations who pursued these studies. The Magi built high towers

from which they watched the movements and appearances of the stars, and they connected these movements with events that happened on the earth and especially with births.

Now about this time there seems to have been a widespread expectation of a coming Deliverer who was to rule over all the earth. Some said He was to be born in Judæa. Also there were many Jews in the land where these Magi lived, and they had told them of the great Messiah who was to come and conquer all the world. You may be sure these devout old astrologers were on the look out for any unusual appearance in the heavens that might betoken His coming. Night after night they climbed their watch-towers and scanned the skies, and when one night they saw a bright new star shining in the direction of the land of Judæa they felt sure that the King was born.

They had a strange religion, these men—full of queer superstitions—and yet they were groping after God, and God led them by the light they had to the feet of Jesus.

You may be sure there was great rejoicing that night in that Eastern land as the Magi gathered together and consulted when they could be ready to set out to pay homage to the King. The gifts must be chosen—the best they had—for was He not a King, and only the best might be offered to a King? The water-bottles must be filled, the food prepared, the tents made ready, the camels loaded; for the jour-

ney was a long and weary one, and would occupy months.

At length the arrangements were made and the preparations began. Some men shook their heads and said the Magi were foolish to venture on such a journey. They would have to cross many a weary desert, they would have to climb many a rugged mountain pass, they would have to traverse many a rapid river. They would be in danger from the scorching sun by day and the cold winds by night, from wild beasts and robbers, from floods and droughts, from sickness and exhaustion. Who knew if they would ever return? But the Wise Men replied that the star was beckoning them and that they must follow where it led. And so they set out.

They travelled by night, for it was cooler then, and at night they had the light of the stars to guide them. At first the strange new star seemed to go before them leading them on, but by and by it disappeared. The days grew into weeks, the weeks into months, and at length one morning they found themselves on the outskirts of Jerusalem. They had come to the capital, for surely the great King would be found in the capital of His country.

As they entered one of the gates they inquired of a sentry where was He who was born King of the Jews, for they had seen His star in the east and were come to worship Him. The man stopped a yawn to gaze at them. He had been up all night and was just going off duty. "King of the Jews, King of the Jews!" Was

it King Herod they wanted? Well, of course, he was to be found up at the palace. But he certainly was not *born* a king. He had been made a king by force of Roman arms, but he was not born into the royal estate. Besides, he was an old man now—almost seventy years of age. No, that could not be the king they were seeking.

They went on into the city, and soon they met a Jewish merchant hurrying to the market-place. They repeated their question—"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" The man looked amazed. The King of the Jews born! The great Messiah come to earth! Who had been telling them fables? Certainly the Messiah would come some day. Was He not the hope of all the Jews and would He not go forth conquering and to conquer? But when He came there would be some strange manifestation of God. Everyone would know about His advent. No, no, they might take his (the merchant's) word for it that the great Deliverer had not arrived. He was in the market-place every day except the Sabbath, and he heard all the news of the countryside. If anything unusual happened he would be the first to know it. To be sure there had been that strange story of the shepherds many weeks ago. It had raised no little stir in the town for a day or two. But of course when people thought the matter over they saw the absurdity of it. Who ever heard of a great king being born in a stable? The thing was ridiculous! He was sorry they had come so far on a fool's errand, but if they had any

wares to exchange he would be pleased to examine them. After that, the sooner they returned to their own country the better.

And so it was with everyone they inquired of. Nobody seemed to know anything about the new King. Many looked alarmed. Had an unknown pretender sprung up, and were they to have disturbances and bloodshed in their midst? The Wise Men might well have been discouraged, but they felt so sure that the star had betokened the birth of the great Messiah, and they were so determined that they would discover the King, that they continued to ask their question—"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

At last the news came to the ears of Herod; and Herod was sorely troubled. Had the Messiah really come or had someone invented this story to cause a disturbance among the Jews and so wrest his throne from him? He must look into the matter at once. He must discover where this child was to be found and slay him before the Jews took up his cause.

So he sent for the wise Jewish priests and scribes and demanded of them where their Christ was to be born. And when he had got the necessary information he sent for the Wise Men secretly and told them to go to the village of Bethlehem six miles to the south of Jerusalem, and when they had found the young child to come back and report to him that he also might go and worship him.

So the Wise Men set out once more. It was evening, and as they went on their way they discussed

among themselves how they would know in which house to look for the baby. And as they talked one of them looked up into the starry heavens. And lo, the star which had appeared to them in the East and had vanished as they travelled, appeared again and went before them. It led them to Bethlehem and seemed to stand over a certain humble house in the village. And there at last they found the King of kings whom they had sought so long and so faithfully; there at last they fell down and worshipped Him and offered up their gifts.

Boys and girls, there are two things we can learn from these Wise Men of old.

1. They found the star because they looked for it. God has given us many stars to guide us to Jesus. There is the star of beauty—the beauty of the world around us, which speaks to us of God's love for us. There is the shining light of God's Word in which we can all read and learn of Him. There is the star of conscience which calls to us every day. There is the star of our mother's love which is but a feeble reflection of the love of God. Above all, there is the star of Jesus' tender pleading self-sacrificing love which draws us to His side. Have you looked for any of these stars, dear children?

2. And second, when these Wise Men had found the star they followed it. It isn't much use finding the star unless we follow. It is only when we follow that

it leads to the feet of Jesus. Many of you have found the star, your own particular star, for there are many stars and we are not all led by the same one. If you have found your star, then follow it. Don't turn your back on it. It is only a star, but it will lead you to the Sun of Righteousness.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS GIFT.

They offered unto him gifts.—Matt. ii. 11.

THE happy Christmas-time has come round once more, and for the past few weeks there have been little under-currents of excitement in our homes. There have been wonderful mysterious secrets, strange whisperings behind doors, and swift hidings of little bits of work when mother came suddenly and unexpectedly into the room. And there has been much guessing, too, as to what Santa Claus will put into our stockings on Christmas morning.

Now if Jesus Christ had not come down to earth there would have been no Christmas presents. We give each other presents at Christmas-time because it is Jesus' birthday. Long ago the Wise Men brought Him gifts and laid them beside His cradle. But Jesus is no longer the Babe in Bethlehem. So instead of giving Him presents, we give them to each other. And we know that when we are making other people happy, we are making Him happy too.

I want to talk to you for a little about the Wise Men and their gifts.

Who were these Wise Men? We really do not

know. Out of the mysterious East they came, and into it they disappeared again. Some people say they were three kings who came to pay homage to the King of the Jews, and there is a wonderful legend of how in their old age they were converted to Christianity by the apostle Thomas. The legend tells us that they went as missionaries to savage tribes, that they were put to death by them, and that, long afterwards, a Frankish king took their bones home with him and buried them in his Cathedral at Cologne. But all we really know is that they were Wise Men and that they came out of the East to see Jesus. And that was the very best thing they could have done.

But what of the presents the Wise Men brought? Some people have found a special meaning in these three gifts. They say that the gold was an offering to a King, the frankincense an offering to God, while the myrrh was a gift for Christ's burial and foretold His death—

> Gold a monarch to declare,
> Frankincense that God is there,
> Myrrh to tell the heavier tale
> Of His death and funeral.

Perhaps people have got that idea from the purposes for which frankincense and myrrh were used.

Frankincense is a kind of gum or resin which is procured from an Indian tree by slitting the bark. It was mixed with other things to make incense, and this incense was poured upon the offerings which were offered up to God in the Temple and was burned along

with them. So the sweet odour of the frankincense rose to God with the prayers of the priests.

Myrrh is also a gum procured from a tree. It is a spice and was used as a perfume and also in burying the dead. You remember how Nicodemus brought myrrh with him when he came to bury the body of Jesus.

Now I have said that Jesus is no longer a Babe in Bethlehem and so we give each other presents instead of giving them to Him. But there are some gifts we can still bring to Jesus, gifts that He longs to have.

1. We can bring Him *gold.* Gold stands for the most precious things. And what is the most precious thing we have? I think it is just our lives. So we can give our lives to Christ's service. We can help to fight the evil that is in the world and in our own hearts. We can help to make the earth better, and sweeter, and brighter. We can use the talents God has given us to make other people happier and wiser. And when we are doing this we are giving Jesus a gift more precious than gold.

2. We can bring Christ *frankincense.* I think frankincense stands for prayers. And this is an offering Jesus dearly loves. When He was on earth He loved to have the little children gather round His knees, He loved to listen to what they said. And He still loves to have them gather round His knees, and He still loves to listen when they speak to Him.

3. We can bring Him *myrrh.* Myrrh is used to purify and preserve, and so I think it stands for the things that are purest and most lasting. And what is the thing that is purest and most lasting? I think it is just the love and devotion of our hearts. For love has conquered sin and death, and lives for ever and ever.

There is a beautiful legend which tells how a little girl in Bethlehem took Jesus a Christmas present. She had heard the story of the Wise Men who had come from far to see the Baby King. And she, too, longed to go and see Him. But she could not visit a king without taking an offering with her and she had nothing to offer, for she was very, very poor. So she went out with her little bare feet and crept up close to the inn where the Baby was sleeping. And as she stood there in the cold snow she wept because she had nothing to give Him. Then, as she wept, out of the snow grew a beautiful white flower whose petals were flushed with pink. If was the first Christmas rose. And the little girl heard a soft voice speaking to her. It was the voice of an angel, and it asked her why she was so sad. She told him how she longed to see the Baby King and how she had nothing to offer Him. Then the angel showed her the beautiful flower that had blossomed at her feet. He bade her pluck it and carry it to the King, and he told her that the beautiful white flower was her pure desire and the pink flush her heart's love for the Baby.

And that is the gift that Jesus values more than any

other—the gift of our love. We may have nothing else to give Him, but if we bring Him that He is content. It is a poor, shabby little gift at the best, but He does not think it poor or mean. He prizes it above all others, and He glorifies it and makes it beautiful and pure.

The Wise Men came from far to see Jesus, but we have no distance to go to give Him our offering, for He is here in our midst to-day. Just think how glad He will be to tell the angels who sang at His birth—"I have received the very best Christmas present to-day, for a little child has given Me himself."

NAZARETH.

A city called Nazareth.—Matt. ii. 23.

WHEN you try to realize that Jesus Christ once really lived on this earth, you feel that you would like to know how He lived and what His home was like when He was a little boy in the village of Nazareth.

Nazareth lies in that part of Palestine which is called Galilee. If you look at a map of Palestine you will see, near the middle of it, a large plain called the Plain of Esdraelon. Picture to yourself this plain stretching away into the distance for miles and miles. On the edge of the plain, as you look towards the north, you see some low hills, and beyond these higher hills, and beyond these again, and above them all, the mountain of Hermon, its top covered with snow and shining in the sun.

On one of the lower ranges of hills just above the plain is Nazareth. You cannot see it till you are close to it, for it lies in a nest among the hills. Think of a hollow shaped like a shallow basin, with hills rising up round it and shutting it in on every side. At the bottom, and on one side of the basin, is Nazareth.

The narrow, uneven streets climb up the slope. In some places there is a cliff on one side and houses on the other. The streets are so steep that you may walk off the path on to the flat roof of a house. These are not the very houses which were there when Jesus lived on earth, for they must have crumbled away long ago, but these are built in much the same way, and they stand on nearly the same spot.

Round the town lie fields of wheat and barley, and thousands of fruit trees — vines, figs, olives, and pomegranates. If you came to Nazareth in spring, you would find the hillsides green almost to the top, and a great many flowers everywhere. In April the crops grow ripe; in May they are all cut down. Then through the summer everything looks parched and brown, and the flowers are burnt up by the heat, for there is no rain in summer. In November the rain begins to fall, and soon the grass and flowers rush up again and the little hollow in the hills is green and bright once more.

In Jesus' day, as now, the houses were poor. Usually they had only one or two rooms. The roofs were flat. Sometimes there were no windows, and the light entered only by the door. If there were windows they were high up in the wall and had no glass. There was no chimney or fireplace. The people did not need fires so much as we do, and did not use much cooked food. When they had a fire it was lighted on

the clay floor of the house and the smoke escaped through holes in the walls. There was scarcely any furniture. The beds were thin mattresses which were rolled up all day and spread on the floor at night. There were some stools, and boxes for keeping clothing, some cooking utensils, and large jars for water. A lamp burned night and day. Often the cows and donkeys and camels, etc., lived in the same room with the family, just as the pigs do in Ireland to-day. But the part where the family lived was raised two or three feet, and had a few steps up to it.

It was in this quiet spot that Jesus was brought up. Here He watched the lilies grow, and the sower go out to sow his seed. He noticed the fig tree putting out its leaves. He saw the sparrows hopping about, and the hen gathering her chickens under her wings. He watched the shepherd go out to the hills to look for a lost sheep. He went to the vineyards and saw useless branches cut off the vines to make the grapes grow better. And many other things He saw which He afterwards used in parables for His disciples.

Below the village there is a spring called the Virgin's Fountain. It is the only spring, so it must have been here that His mother went to draw water, as the women do still. They carry it in large earthenware pitchers on their heads. No doubt Jesus often went with Mary to the well when He

was a little child. He watched her fill her pitcher, and then He climbed the steep street by her side. Very likely He carried the water for her when He grew stronger.

When He was old enough He would be sent to school. Every Jewish boy was sent to school at six. The school was in the synagogue (which was like our church), and the children sat on the floor round the teacher and learned their lessons by repeating them aloud together. They learned reading, writing, and arithmetic, but what they studied most were the books of the Old Testament. So Jesus would read with the other children the stories of Moses and Isaac and Elijah, of the prophets and the kings—all the history of the children of Israel from the time they came from Egypt into the land of Canaan down to the time when He lived.

No doubt He played games too. He spoke of children playing in the market-place at weddings and funerals. He had played with them. And then He worked. When He was very tiny He would watch Joseph at work in his carpenter's shop, making wooden ploughs, and boxes, and doors, and other things; and by and by He Himself began to learn to be a carpenter. Every Jewish boy learned a trade, and most boys followed the trade of their father.

So Jesus lived in this quiet little place shut off from the world for thirty years, and all we are told about His life at that time is that He was obedient to

His parents — all except the story of the visit to Jerusalem at the Passover, when He was lost and found in the Temple.

It seems strange that for so long He should live unknown. But all these years He was doing God's will just as much as when everyone was wondering at His miracles. So when we are learning our lessons at school and helping our parents at home, when we are playing our games and making our friends, we too, if we do these things faithfully and well, are doing God's will and getting ready for the life-work He has chosen for us.

If you went to Nazareth to-day you would find, on a high hill behind the town, an English Orphanage for little orphans of Nazareth, and you would hear them sing this hymn—

We are little Nazareth children,
And our Saviour placed our home
'Mid the olive-trees and vineyards
Where, as Child, He used to roam.

For the Lord, who loves the children,
And was glad to hear their praise,
Cares that Nazareth children know Him,
Do His will and choose His ways.

Cares that they should keep in memory
All that sacred life spent here;
Try in heart to walk beside Him,
Safe and happy in His fear.

And we know that He is coming,
Every knee to Him shall bow;
And the joyous shouts to greet Him
Shall begin in Nazareth now.

Jesus Saviour, dwell within us,
Make a temple of each heart,
Pure and loving, true and holy,
For Thy service set apart.

FIGHTING THE DRAGON.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.—Matt. iv. 1.

If you look at the back of a sovereign or a five-shilling piece, you will see there the figure of a man on horseback tilting at a dragon which is writhing at his feet. His spear is broken in the reptile's side, but the creature is fatally wounded, and the man is coming to close quarters to dispatch it with his sword. This is Saint George, the patron saint of England. In ancient times the English went into battle to the war-cry of "St. George for merrie England," or "God and Saint George."

The reason why St. George was chosen as the special saint of England is said to be this. Robert, the son of William the Conqueror, went to the Holy Land as a Crusader. While he was besieging Antioch, he was in great difficulty, when suddenly St. George appeared bearing a shield with a red cross, and having with him a great army in white. This so terrified the infidels that they fled.

That is one of many legends told about this saint. The one which explains why he is represented as killing a dragon is told in the *Golden Legend.*

One day, it is said, St. George came to the city of Silene in the province of Libya. Now, close to this city there was a lake where dwelt a fierce dragon that terrorized all the country. Every day he had to be fed with two sheep, and when the sheep began to run short they gave him a man and a sheep.

Naturally nobody wanted to become a breakfast for the dragon, and so the people of the city resolved that they would cast lots among the children and young people of the town. On whomsoever the lot should fall that person should be the next victim.

Now it so happened that the lot fell on the king's daughter. And when the news was brought to the king he wept bitterly and begged for eight days' respite. At the end of the eight days he dressed his daughter as if for her wedding and he led her to the place where the dragon lived.

Just then St. George passed by, and when he saw a lady in deep woe he demanded to know the cause. On hearing the reason he mounted his horse and rode forth to fight the dragon. He smote it with his spear, threw it to the ground, and slew it. Then he delivered the princess to her father; and the king and all his people were baptized and became Christians.

So much for the quaint old legend, but what of St. George himself? Who was he, and where did he live?

There are so many accounts of St. George that it is impossible now to say which are true and which are

false. The most likely is that he was born in Cappadocia, and afterwards lived in Palestine. His parents were Christians, and of noble birth, and when he grew up he entered the Roman army. His courage and faithfulness gained promotion for him, and he was a favourite with the Emperor Diocletian. But Diocletian began to persecute the Christians, and then St. George could no longer serve under him. He gave up his high position, and left the army. He had enlisted as a soldier under another Master. He was even bold enough to remonstrate with Diocletian for his cruelty. The Emperor sent him to prison, and tried by every means to induce him to give up being a Christian. First he offered him honours, and then he ordered him to be tortured. But it was useless. He endured the most terrible torture with dauntless courage, and at last he was beheaded, faithful to the end.

Here was a dragon indeed for St. George to fight, the dragon of temptation to sin, which pressed him hard. But though the fight was a very hard one, and he died in the conflict, he died conqueror.

We all have our dragon to fight, our own special dragon, which no one can fight for us. It may be bad temper, or untruthfulness, or selfishness. It may be some evil in the world around us which we must defeat for the sake of others—some injustice, or some cruelty to the helpless, which it falls to our lot to fight for their sakes.

But let us remember that the dragon can be conquered. Christ, our Master, met the dragon too for our sakes and overcame him. He overcame that we may overcome by His help, and if we fight in His strength we are sure of victory.

THE MERCIFUL.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.—Matt. v. 7.

If you went to the city of Florence in Italy, you would see there the beautiful marble Cathedral which stands in a great square. If you had gone there some six hundred years ago you might have seen, lounging in its shadow, during the heat of the day, a number of porters. In those days cabs and carriages were not used. Instead, ladies were carried about in litters by these porters as our own ancestors were carried in sedan chairs; and the men waited near the Cathedral to be hired as cab-men wait on a stand. They were often idle for hours, and while they hung about talking to each other they frequently used oaths and bad language. It troubled one man very much to hear this, and he set himself to put a stop to it. He persuaded the others to agree to pay a fine every time they used an oath. In this way a little money was collected, and then the man, whose name was Pietro Borsi, proposed that they should buy litters with it, and that on these litters the porters should carry to the hospital sick persons, or people wounded in the fights which often took place in the streets. Each man was to take his turn.

From this small beginning there grew a famous society. It was recognized that it was a good and pious thing—worthy of anyone—to care for the sick and helpless. The society gradually came to include not only porters, but men of all classes—tradesmen, professional men, and noblemen, and it was considered an honour to belong to it. It was called the Brotherhood of Mercy.

We are familiar with the name Sisters of Mercy given to an order of women in the Roman Catholic Church, but the Brothers of Mercy are not so well known. The Brotherhood is still in existence, and for six hundred years the Brothers have done their daily deeds of kindness. Every day they meet at a small church in the Cathedral square for prayer. They put on a curious black dress which envelops them completely. Their heads are covered with black hoods and their faces with black masks so that no one knows who does the good deed, and no Brother in particular gets the credit of it.

At church they are told what they must do. Some take up their litters and go to carry a man to the hospital. Others may be sent to nurse a sick man in his own home, or to attend to some dying person. Sometimes there is a sudden need of help. Then a bell is rung in the street, and any Brother who hears it, be he workman or nobleman, must leave whatever he is doing and hasten to do the deed of mercy. He must take no reward but a cup of cold water.

That seems a very fine thing to do, and it is an honour indeed to belong to such an Order. But without going as far as Italy, or wearing a robe, or bearing a name, we may all be Brothers and Sisters of Mercy There is still plenty of room for followers of Pietro Borsi, for those who will do deeds of kindness and love, without show, and without seeking for reward.

1. There is one way open to everybody, rich or poor—the way of mercy to animals. The dumb creatures depend upon us for their happiness, and we are responsible for the way in which we use them. One little boy told his mother that he had joined a society for chasing cats, but his membership was immediately ended. Another boy belonged to a society which "did not kill toads." These are queer societies. But it is not necessary to belong to a society in order to be kind to the animals with which we come in contact, in order to try to persuade others to be kind to them.

A little Edinburgh boy saw a carter ill-using his horse. He was a very little boy, and he was afraid to speak to the man, "But," he said, "I *had* to stop him, so I just said, 'Man, don't be a cad to your horse!'"

And here is another story of how a small boy was kind to animals. It is told us by a Scottish poet, George MacDonald.

In Regent's Park, one cloudless day,
An overdriven sheep,
Come a hard, long, and dusty way,
Throbbing with thirst and hotness lay,
A panting woollen heap.

But help is nearer than we know
For ills of every name:
Ragged enough to scare the crow,
But with a heart to pity woe,
A quick-eyed urchin came.

Little he knew of field or fold,
Yet knew what ailed; his cap
Was ready cup for water cold;
Though creased, and stained, and very old,
'Twas not much torn, good hap!

Shaping the rim and crown he went,
Till crown from rim was deep:
The water gushed from pore and rent,
Before he came one-half was spent—
The other saved the sheep.

O little goat, born, bred in ill,
Unwashed, half-fed, unshorn,
Thou to the sheep from breezy hill
Wast bishop, pastor, what you will,
In London dry and lorn!

2. And there is another way in which we can all show mercy. We can be kind and helpful to those around us who are in trouble or need. There are few people so poor that they cannot be kind to someone still poorer.

To a school in the East of London five hundred poor and hungry children came for basins of soup. Just as the soup was going to be served a gentleman mounted the platform and announced, "Boys, we haven't enough soup to go round. What shall we do?" Promptly the answer came—"Give it to the girls!"

So the girls were served, and still there was some soup left. Again the gentleman spoke—"Boys, we have still some soup, but not enough for all. What shall we do?" Like a flash the answer came back—"Give it to the thin uns!" So the "thin uns" were fed and the strong ones went hungry away.

3. But when we speak of mercy, we most often think of it as a quality shown to those who have done wrong. It has often happened that the best way of preventing wrong-doing has been to show mercy to the guilty one.

During the Crimean War the late Admiral Lord Clarence Paget was in command of one of the British ships in the Baltic. One day a sailor called Dudley was brought before him for some offence. The man was a sort of "black sheep." He was always getting into mischief of some kind, and everybody seemed to think there was no good in him.

Now the Admiral intended to order Dudley to be flogged, but he had noticed, during the examination, that the sailor seemed to consider that every man's hand was against him; so at the last moment he changed his mind and resolved to try what kindness would do. Accordingly he forgave the criminal and ordered the officers and men to treat him as if he had never been guilty of any offence whatsoever.

Some weeks later cholera broke out in the fleet, and the surgeon reported to the Admiral that Dudley had been his right-hand man, attending to the dying day

and night, and never sparing himself. Paget was so touched that he resolved to have the sailor called up on deck and publicly thanked. But that night Dudley caught infection and died. So this man whom everybody had thought good for nothing gave his life in trying to save others.

But why should we be merciful?

We should be merciful because we ourselves need mercy from God.

There was once a governor of Georgia who found that his servant had stolen some of his wine. He was very angry, and said he would have the man flogged. His minister begged him to pardon the thief this once, but he said, "It is of no use talking. I never forgive." "Then," said the minister, "I hope you know you will not be forgiven, so I hope you have never sinned."

Again, we should be merciful, because when we are unmerciful and unforgiving we are doing an injury to ourselves. We are making our hearts hard and unlovely, and we are shutting ourselves out from the face of Christ.

When Leonardi da Vinci was engaged upon his great painting of the Last Supper, he indulged his hatred of a man who had injured him by copying his face for the face of Judas. Then he tried to paint the face of the Saviour, but all in vain. Again and again he tried, but the result was always the same. He could not depict the face of Jesus. At last he took his

brush and painted out the likeness of his enemy. And in its place he put another face. The next day he was able to paint the likeness of Jesus according to his ideal.

So, boys and girls, we should be merciful because we need mercy, we should be merciful because we hurt ourselves when we are unforgiving, but most of all we should be merciful because Jesus Christ is merciful and loving to all; and if we would grow into His likeness, then we must keep warm within us a heart of mercy and love.

THE PEACEMAKERS.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.—Matt. v. 9.

MANY kings have had some special name attached to them because of their greatness or on account of some quality for which they were famous. We have Alfred the Great and Frederick the Great, William the Conqueror and William the Silent, Ethelred the Unready, Richard the Lion-hearted, and so on. Edward VII. bore a finer name than any of these. He was called Edward the Peacemaker, and he was given that name because he was very wise and tactful in smoothing quarrels and preventing wars.

An old writer has said that there are three things people may be—peacebreakers or peacekeepers or peacemakers. I wonder to which of these three classes you and I belong. Let us look at each of them for a minute or two.

1. Well, first there are the *peacebreakers.* There are some people who go about the world looking for slights; they are ready to pick a quarrel with anyone who thwarts them. Oliver Cromwell once said of John Lilburne that he was so quarrelsome that, if he could

find nobody else to quarrel with, John would quarrel with Lilburne and Lilburne with John. And there are a good many "John Lilburnes" still.

But you may be a peacebreaker though you are not really one of these extra specially quarrelsome people. It takes two to make a quarrel, and if you allow yourself to quarrel with anybody about anything, whether they be a "John Lilburne" or not, then you, too, are a peacebreaker.

And the peacebreakers include not only those who break the peace *with* others, but, what is even worse, those who break the peace *between* others. The surest way to do that is to tell tales about people behind their backs and repeat unwise things that your friends have said about each other.

A clever Frenchman once said, "If all men knew what each said of the other, there would not be four friends in this world." Perhaps the Frenchman was looking too much on the black side of things, but often people say things about their friends in haste which they regret at leisure, and if you go and repeat these nasty remarks then you are a peacebreaker of the most contemptible sort.

2. Then there are the *peacekeepers.*

There are two ways of keeping the peace—the *wrong* way and the *right* way. Sometimes it is wrong to keep the peace. Britain might have kept the peace with Germany by not entering the European War, but by so doing she would have wronged

her national conscience and sullied for ever her national honour.

Some people are very pleasant to live with. They do not quarrel or fight. They do not interfere. They would do anything for a quiet life. But sometimes to make peace one must break the peace. It is easier, when two of your friends have quarrelled, to stand aside and let them alone than to try to make them friends again. If you see something unjust done it is easier to say, "It's none of my business," than to try to put it right. But to stand aside while wrong is done because you are a lover of peace is not to be a peacekeeper. It is to be a coward.

But there is a right way of keeping the peace too. There was once a business man who went to London and made a large fortune in that city. He was never known to lose his temper, and some acquaintances laid a wager that they would make him do so. They went to his warehouse and asked to see some cloth. They made him take down piece after piece until the whole counter was littered. Then one of them produced a five-shilling piece and asked for five shillings' worth of a certain material.

The merchant took the crown, laid it on the cloth, cut neatly round it, and handed the tiny bit of material to the purchaser. So he kept the peace by keeping his temper, and he really came off the winner in the end.

3. Best of all there are the *peacemakers*. And not one of us is too young to be that.

There is a beautiful story of an incident that happened in the American War between the North and the South.

On one occasion two squadrons of cavalry—one belonging to the North, the other to the South—sighted each other across an open piece of country. At once the bugles rang out and the opposing forces dashed to the charge. When they were about a hundred yards apart a little child ran out from a clump of trees and came between the horsemen. Instantly the bugles sounded "Halt!" One officer from each squadron dismounted and went to the child to comfort him. They talked to each other in quite a friendly fashion, and then one of the officers picked up the boy and carried him on his shoulder back to his own regiment. Afterwards the bugles sounded the "Retreat," and the squadrons separated. As one of their number said, "We just didn't feel like fighting then."

That is what peacemaking means. It just means "coming between," and a little child can do it.

There is another fine story about how a little child got in between. She was a very poor little girl and she lived in the slums of a great city. Her mother was a cripple and her father was a drunkard, and she had a very sad home indeed.

One summer some friends who saw that she was badly in need of fresh air made arrangements for her to go away for a fortnight to the country. But when they came to fetch her she refused to leave home. Yet she seemed to want to go and they could not understand

her refusal. At last, after much persuasion, she gave the reason. What do you think she said? "You see, it's like this. Father drinks, and when he comes home awful mad, he pitches into mother and I gets in between." So she gave up the flowers and the birds and the sweet country air because there would be nobody to "get in between."

Boys and girls, it sometimes costs to be a peacemaker, to "get in between," but it is angel's work. And for the peacemakers there is a splendid promise—"they shall be called sons of God." Jesus was called the Prince of Peace. When He came to earth the angels sang, "Peace on earth, goodwill towards men." He was the great Peacemaker. He is our Peace, and one of the most Christlike bits of work on earth is to make peace.

A PINCH OF SALT.

Ye are the salt of the earth.—Matt. v. 13.
Have salt in yourselves.—Mark ix. 50.

If someone were to tell you that you might have either sugar or salt but not both, which would you choose? Perhaps most of you, without stopping to consider, would reply that you would rather have no salt than no sugar. But would you really?

No sugar would mean no sweets, no jam, and rather a tasteless pudding. Yes, but you could always have butter on your bread, and you might eat fruit with your pudding, and perhaps, if you didn't have sweets for a very long time, you could manage to get along without them.

But try to imagine how queer meat, or fish, or porridge, or potatoes would be without salt! An Irish boy was once asked what salt was, and he replied, "Salt is the thing that makes taties taste bad if you don't put it on them." Don't you think that was a good answer? Salt is added to eatables to flavour them, and not only to flavour them, but to bring out the flavour. For a pinch of salt is added even to sweet things like puddings and pastry to make them taste nicer.

Not only is salt necessary to make our food palatable, it is also required to make it wholesome. In order to be healthy, animals and human beings alike require to eat a certain amount of salt every day. Can you guess how much salt each human being in Great Britain consumes in one year? Sixty-two pounds! Some may eat a little more, some a little less, but that is the average. We need salt to keep our blood in a healthy condition and to help us to digest our food. In fact, we could not live without it. A traveller who crossed South America relates how his horses and cattle died because he had not sufficient salt to give them. They died—starved for want of salt even while they were nibbling the green grass.

There is yet another common use of salt. It is employed for preserving things. Meat or fish which is not wanted for use at once may be salted, and so kept good and wholesome. In the days of our grandfathers people had not sufficient feeding stuffs for their cattle during the winter, so they killed a great many animals in the autumn and salted the flesh, and they lived on salted meat all winter. Old people can tell you of the great salting time at the beginning of winter in preparation for the months when they had no other food.

When Jesus was on earth He lived in a small unimportant corner of the world. All around was a great empire of heathen people—very powerful, and very wicked. He gathered round Him a few poor

common people — fishermen, and tradesmen, and farmers—who believed in His words, and tried to do what He told them. To them He said one day that they were "the salt of the earth." What did He mean?

Before Jesus came, the rule of the world was—let every man live for himself, and let the weak go to the wall. But Jesus brought into the world the spirit of love and self-sacrifice, the spirit which respects the rights of others, which has pity on the poor and helpless, which takes care of little children. That was the marvellous thing that Jesus did. He lived and died in that spirit, and He taught it to His disciples. That was what was going to make them "the salt of the earth." Like salt, they were to make the world a sweeter place to live in. Like salt, they were to make it more wholesome. Like salt, they were to preserve it from ruin and decay.

It is because the disciples were faithful to the spirit and the teaching of Jesus that the world is a better place for you and me to-day.

And, boys and girls, we too can be "the salt of the earth" if we "have salt" in ourselves, and that just means, if we ask Jesus to fill us with His spirit of love and self-sacrifice. For the world still needs this salt, and we can be the bearers of it.

Once a little girl went into a chemist's shop and asked for twopence worth of "glory divine." The chemist was puzzled, and inquired what her mother wanted it for. "To throw round the room and in the back

yard," said the little one. Then the chemist understood. He said, "Oh, I expect it's chloride of lime (a kind of disinfectant) you want." And the child nodded her head.

But, boys and girls, that little girl was nearer the truth than she knew. What is needed, not only "round the room and in the back yard," but all over the world, is "glory divine"; and that is just another name for the glorious loving self-sacrificing spirit of Jesus.

Will you ask Jesus to fill you with this spirit? Will you help to spread it abroad?

HOW TO BE A LAMP.

A lamp.—Matt. v. 15.

WOULD you like to know how to be a lamp? Boys and girls can all be lamps. They can't be electric arc lights or incandescent burners—they must leave that to the grown-ups—but they can all be lamps.

Jesus once told His followers to be lamps, and to let their light shine out into the dark world around them. If you have what is called the Authorized Version of the Bible, and if you turn to Matt. v. 15, you will find that the word is "candle." This is really a slight mistake in translation, and the Revised Version has called it by its right name—a lamp.

Have you ever seen one of those queer Eastern lamps to which Christ referred? Some of them are just like shallow earthenware saucers pinched in one place to form a sort of peak. The saucer is filled with oil and the wick is inserted at the pinched end. Other lamps are like two saucers fastened together, the top one being turned upside down. Towards one side the lamp is narrower, and in the narrow part a small hole is made to contain the wick. Another hole is made in the centre of the lamp to let in the oil. Some

of these lamps are quite plain, others are beautifully ornamented, others bear inscriptions.

Now, how can boys and girls be lamps? Just by being happy. You have all heard of Robert Louis Stevenson—the boy who, like Peter Pan, "never grew up" because he always kept the heart of a child. He was as full of fun and frolic when he was a man as when he was a child, and he kept happy even when he was very, very ill. Some of you have read his stories—*Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island*—and some even of the tiniest can understand his poems, for he wrote a whole book of poetry specially for children.

Well, Stevenson says in one of his books that "a happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note; their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted." He tells a story about a ragged, barefoot boy, who went running down the street chasing a marble. He looked so jolly that he put everyone he passed into a good humour. He chased away such black thoughts from one man that he stopped the boy and gave him some money with the remark: "You see what sometimes comes of looking pleased."

1. I want you to remember in the first place that *God wants you to be happy.* Some people seem to have a queer idea that it is wrong to be happy. They pull a long face and look solemn, but I don't think the world is very much the better of them. God made

the kittens to catch their tails, and the puppies to worry things, and the little lambs to gambol in the fields, and He made the children full of fun and frolic too. Just be as merry as you can, only don't buy your happiness at the expense of other people.

2. The world would be a great deal poorer without the laughter of little children, and that brings me to the second point—*in being happy we make other people happy.* There is an old Eastern story about a king who owned a very precious gem called a beryl-stone. This stone was most beautifully cut and polished; but the wonderful thing about it was that when it was set upon the Royal Standard, it shone like the sun and gave light for miles around. By its rays the king's army could march for miles during the dark hours, and the people could work at night just as if it were day. You see what a lot of good the stone did just by shining; and so we can do a tremendous lot of good just by being happy.

I should like to tell you what a sunbeam did by shining. One morning in February, a little sunbeam was sent by its mother to pay a visit to the earth. The Sun was just rising over the eastern sea when it set out. "Good-bye, little one," said she; "be happy, work well, and come back to me in the evening." "All right, Mother," cried the sunbeam, and away it went, skipping and dancing over the waters. The ocean laughed beneath its glance, and a lazy boy who was just yawning his way out of bed said, "Oh my,

what a ripping day! I must buck up, and get out to the garden before school."

That gave the sunbeam an idea, for it had overheard the word "garden." It peeped into the garden, and saw a poor little frozen snowdrop struggling into life. It kissed the snowdrop and the flower blossomed beneath the touch of its warm lips. Then it played among the branches of a tree where a shivering thrush was standing on one leg. "Too-ee-too, too-ee-too," sang the thrush. "Why, I do believe spring has come! Perhaps I'll find a worm this morning. It seems warmer than usual." So he shook his feathers, and off he flew to look for his breakfast. And a weary invalid, who for many dark days had hovered between life and death, smiled, and all unwittingly repeated the words of the thrush—"I do believe spring has come!" Then he added, "I think I should like to get better."

The sunbeam danced along till it came to a great city. It peeped in at an office window where a man sat worried with the cares of business. It smiled in his face and smoothed out the wrinkles. Then it visited a room where a weary woman toiled for husband and children, and her toil seemed lighter for the glint of sunshine. It looked in upon two people who were just starting a quarrel. And they laughed and said, "One can't be cross on a day like this."

Next it visited a slum. It glanced upon the cobwebs in the corner of a room, and a woman exclaimed, "I really think I must have a bit of a clean-up here.

It's wonderful how the sunshine shows up things!" And the sunbeam chuckled with glee as it went on its way.

So it travelled until evening. It was very tired, but it had just one more task. It lit up a mountain-peak where the snows lay, and the mountain-top turned to rosy pink. And a man who was dying without hope and without faith, lifted up his eyes unto the hills, and found rest for his soul.

Then, with a sigh, the sunbeam fell asleep in the arms of the mother Sun. And the Sun was well-pleased with her child, for she knew that it had discovered one of life's greatest secrets — that in making others happy is to be found the deepest and most lasting joy.

3. Lastly, *the best way to be happy ourselves and to make others happy is to have our hearts filled with the love of God.* There was once a king whose great desire was to make his people happy. So he asked two of his wise men how it was to be done, and he gave them two months to think out the problem. At the end of the time they appeared before him. One carried a parchment on which were written two hundred rules; the other brought—nothing. The king grew very tired before the two hundred rules were all read. Then he turned to the other man. "What is thine answer?" he asked. And the man replied in two words—"Love God." "What," said the king, "I asked thee how I should make my people happy and

thou tellest me to love God." "True," replied the wise man, "but thou canst not love God without loving thy people also."

God is the source of all happiness, just as the Sun is the source of all light. The oil in the lamp gives out only as much light as it took in long ago from the Sun; so we must always return to God to have our lamps refilled.

The late Queen of Rumania had a motto which consisted of only two words. Here it is, and I think we might take it as our motto too—

GIVE JOY.

THE SECOND MILE.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain.—Matt. v. 41.

RATHER more than five hundred years before the birth of Christ, about the time that the Israelites were in captivity in Babylon, there lived in Persia a king called Cyrus. In those days there were no post-offices such as we have, and no postmen. But King Cyrus invented a means of getting his messages carried throughout the land.

On all the chief highways he established, at convenient intervals, stations with relays of horses and men. When he wished to send a letter or decree he dispatched it by courier to the first station on each of the highways. From there another courier carried it to the second station, and there a third courier was found to take it to the third station, and so on until the king's message was known throughout the land.

But sometimes these couriers required help, and they were allowed to press into their service any man, or horse, or boat, or vehicle that they came across. Nobody could refuse because they dared not disobey the commands of the king or any of his representatives,

but often there must have been much grumbling about this inconvenient law.

At the time of Christ the Romans were conquerors of Palestine, and they had brought with them into Palestine this custom which they had copied from the Persians. But they had altered and extended it. When the Roman soldiers were travelling through the land they could oblige any man or beast to accompany them a certain distance to carry their baggage. Now the Jews hated this custom. They were obliged to comply with it because they were under Roman rule, but they secretly rebelled against it.

This is the custom to which Jesus refers when He talks about the second mile. He says, "If anybody presses you into their service for one mile, be ready to go two with them." And by that He just means to tell His disciples that they are always to be willing to do a little more than they are asked, a little more than they are obliged to do, that they are not to do any service grudgingly.

Now there are certain things in life that we are all driven to do—things that are not pleasant to do. We have to worry away at the multiplication table, and Latin grammar, and French verbs, and dates in history. We have to get up in the morning and go to bed at night. We have to wash our hands and face and take off our muddy boots. We have to obey rules and laws at home and at school, and sometimes these rules are very annoying. The big people have to obey laws too,

and some of them are not very pleasant either; but if you want to get along at all comfortably in this world you have to obey rules.

There are two ways of doing what you are obliged to do. You may do just as little as you can, or you may do as much as you can. For instance, father asks you to weed a garden bed one afternoon and he promises you sixpence for doing it. Well, there are two ways you can do it. Here is the first way. You pull out all the weeds and leave them lying on the path; then you come in and demand your sixpence. That is going the first mile. But here is the second way. You pull out the weeds and clear them away. Then you think the border looks rather rough, so you fetch the rake and smooth it. Then you notice that some of the plants need supporting, so you get some sticks and gardener's grass and tie them up. And then you think the walk looks a bit untidy, so you rake it too. That is going the second mile. You are doing more than you are asked to do because you are interested in your work.

When you do more than you are asked, when you do things willingly and ungrudgingly, when you go out of your way to oblige somebody or be kind to somebody, then you are going the second mile. And I want to give you two reasons why we should serve in this way.

1. The first reason is because it is the *happiest* service.

It makes things happier *for yourself.* If you set about any task thinking, "What a bother this is! How soon can I get done with it, and how little can I do to get it finished?" then you certainly won't enjoy it. But if you put your heart and soul into your work and try to do it as well as you possibly can, you will get quite a lot of pleasure out of it.

And it makes things happier *for other people.* When some boys and girls are asked to do a thing they don't like, they pull such a long face, and they move so slowly, and they look altogether so "grudgy" and "grumpy" that the people who asked them to do the service feel as if they would rather do it themselves a thousand times over. But there are other boys and girls who, when they are asked to do a favour, look as if they liked doing it. Their feet carry them so fast that they are back in no time, and their faces shine like morning sunlight. They give you a cosy sort of feeling round your heart.

2. The other reason why we should go the second mile is that it is the *best* way of serving. Real service begins when we stop counting the cost. If we are always counting and calculating and measuring we shall never serve well because we shall always be trying to see just how little we can do and how much we can get in return.

Once upon a time there was a great king who wished to choose a good and wise man to rule over a distant province of his kingdom, so he sent for one of

his councillors named Heth Arman. When the councillor arrived the king said, "Come with me into my gardens." Now the king had three gardens. They were all alike in shape and size. The same flowers bloomed in all three, and in the midst of each stood a beautiful marble fountain.

When Heth Arman had seen all of them the king said to him, "Now tell me what you thought of my gardens." "Well, your majesty," replied the councillor, "if I may speak what is in my mind, I was disappointed with the first garden. It was not kept as a garden should be kept. The paths were trodden down, there were weeds among the sickly flowers, and the marble of the fountain was soiled and stained."

"And what of the second garden?" asked the king. "That," replied the councillor, "was a well-kept garden. The paths were tidy, the borders were in good order, the flowers were large and fine, and the fountain was clean and clear."

"And the third garden?" asked the king. "Ah! your majesty," replied Heth Arman, "words fail me to describe it. The beauty of it filled me with joy. The air was sweet with the fragrance of flowers, and the songs of the birds mingled with the music of the water as it fell sparkling into the pure marble basin. It was a perfect garden."

"Yes," said the king, "you have judged well, and now I will tell you why the gardens are so different. The first is kept by my slaves, who serve because they must and for fear of punishment. The second is

attended to by my paid servants, who serve for hope of reward. They put into the garden only as much as they expect to take out of it. But the third garden is kept by those who love me, and they are never content with less than the best. And now," continued the king, "I am going to send you into a far country to rule over some of my people. Serve not for fear of punishment, or for hope of reward. Love the people, and love me, and all will be well."

Do you see the meaning of the story, boys and girls? The best service is the service of love, the service that does not count the cost. Duty carries us only to the end of the first mile, but love carries us into the second mile—the mile of joy and liberty.

And it is the same with God's laws as with the laws of men. Long, long ago God saw that men must have laws to guide them and restrain them, so He gave them the Ten Commandments. And men kept them more or less badly. Then Jesus came. He did not do away with those laws of God, but He filled them with a new meaning and gave men a new reason for keeping them. And it is just like that with us. We keep God's laws more or less badly, and often they irk us—until Jesus comes. And then when we let Him into our lives, He changes everything. What before seemed irksome becomes a joy. We serve because we love, and in that service is perfect freedom.

HEAVENLY TREASURE.

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.—Matt. vi. 20.

THERE is always a great fascination about the idea of hoards of treasure stored up or hidden until it is found by the bold adventurer who comes in search of it. There are many tales and legends of such treasures. One of the most famous is that of the Nibelungs. The Nibelungs were dwarfs and had a vast hoard of wealth in the inside of a mountain. This wealth was taken from them by the brave hero Siegfried.

Some such stories are founded on fact. For instance, those of the sunk treasure-ships and buried gold of the Spaniards. It is still believed that they may be found some day. Not long ago divers were engaged in searching on the west coast of Scotland for relics of a Spanish vessel which sank there at the time of the invasion by the Spanish Armada. It was believed that the ship had treasure on board, but nothing of value was found. Some other people have been exploring an island in the Pacific Ocean, where they suppose a great deal of money was buried by pirates, but they too have been unsuccessful.

If we have a large sum of money to take care of, we put it in the bank. But in countries where there are no banks, other means must be found of keeping it safe. The simplest way is to dig a hole in the ground and hide it there, and this is often done.

In the East, women buy rings and other ornaments with their money, and so they carry their fortune about with them. But in Eastern countries wealth consists not only in money and jewels, but in fine embroidery and clothes of rich material. These cannot be buried nor can they always be worn, and if clothes are laid away for a long time it is very difficult to keep them from moths, even more difficult than it is in this country. There are three enemies, then, to the treasure of the rich man in the East, such a man as our Lord had in His mind when He spoke the words of the text. Clothes are destroyed by the moths, treasure buried in the ground may be spoiled by rust, and thieves may break into the house and steal. The last was very easy, since the walls of the houses were often made of clay. No burglar's tools were needed. The thief had only to "dig through" the wall.

But treasure need not be money or jewels. Your treasure is what you love and prize most. For one person this may be money, for another it may be fame, for another his collection of pictures, for another his prize dogs. We should say "his heart is set on it," and wherever it is his thoughts will be.

Now Jesus did not mean that it was wrong to save money, or to have beautiful things and care for them.

He gave us the eyes to see beauty and the skill to produce it. He knew that it is only wise and right that people should provide for old age or for their children. He knew that money is a great power for good if it is well used. But He warned us against the danger of putting our heart in these things and making them our treasure.

If a man knew that in a short time a certain bank would be ruined, he would not put his money into it. When your mother is buying a suit for you, she asks herself, "Will this wear?" and if she knows the material will soon go into holes she will not buy it. Now all the treasures of which we have been speaking are like that. They will not last beyond this life. So if our hearts are set on such things, if they are all our treasure, some day we shall lose our all.

But there are other kinds of treasures, treasures which neither moth nor rust can touch, nor thieves steal. There are treasures of character, treasures of service done to others, treasures of a heart given into Christ's keeping and of a life used in His service. These are the treasures that will last for ever and that nothing can destroy.

Let me tell you a story.

A ship was sailing over the sea, when suddenly it struck on a sunken rock, and in a few minutes it had gone to pieces. Now one man had been asleep, and the part of the ship on which he was lying was carried by the waves to the shore and thrown up on dry land.

When the sleeping man awoke he did not know how he had come there, but he saw a great many people round him who said he should be their king. They brought him royal robes and set him on a throne, and offered him costly gifts. He had servants round him eager to do all he wished. He was filled with wonder to find himself a rich, powerful king.

Then an aged counsellor came to speak to him. He told him that he would be king only for a time, how long he knew not. For it was the custom in that country to banish the king after a time and make a new one. All round the coast there were islands, bare and dreary, and on each of these might be found a banished king. When the new king came the old king was stripped of all he had, his servants left him, and he was sent away to one of these islands.

The king was filled with sorrow; but the old man said he would advise him what to do, though, he added, he had given the advice to many before, but they would not believe his warning or follow his counsel. What he advised the king to do was this. While he was still king and had many servants at his command, he should make them build him a palace on the island to which he would be sent, cultivate the barren ground, and make it a beautiful home to which he could retire.

The king thought this very good advice, so he sent his servants to build him a palace. In the palace he put all that he would like to have; for he had plenty of money while he was king and could get what he liked.

Round the palace he planted trees for shade, and beautiful gardens, and he made fountains to water them. Sometimes when the wind blew from the direction of the island the perfume of the flowers was wafted to the king, and he thought of the happy home waiting for him, and longed to go to it. So that, when at last his people came one day and rudely told him he should be king no more, he did not go with sadness, feeling that he had lost everything, but gladly, knowing that he was going where he would be happier than he had ever been as king.

Boys and girls, this story is a parable: it is a picture of what our life on earth should be. If we want to lay up treasure in Heaven—the only treasure that lasts, the only treasure that is worth having—then we must begin here and now. We must ask God to give us hearts to love the things that He loves; we must ask Him to give us hearts to love and to serve Him; for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also.

TWO MASTERS.

No man can serve two masters.—Matt. vi. 24.

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, when King John was on the throne of England, there was a great stir in Italy. As you know, the Pope was very powerful in those days, and when the Emperor died his widow asked the Pope to be the guardian of her young son, Frederick, till he was old enough to reign. But one of the Emperor's generals, called Markwald, claimed that he had the right to be regent. So the Italians, who supported the Pope, and the Germans, who favoured Markwald, went to war, and many battles were fought in the south of Italy.

At first the Germans gained every fight, but at last a brave Duke called Walter of Brienne came to the rescue of the Pope's party, and under him it began to defeat the Germans. The Italians hated the Germans and were determined not to have a German as regent. All the brave young men in Italy, especially the nobles, joined the army. Many saw a chance to win fame and glory in the war, and when a noble set out to join the Duke, a number of men would gather to him as his followers.

In the city of Assisi there lived at that time a

rich cloth merchant who had a son called Francis. He was a gay, extravagant, kind-hearted young fellow, fond of all the pleasures of the time, but he was also very kind to the poor. These were the days of knights and tournaments. They were the days when minstrels wandered from place to place singing of warlike deeds—of King Arthur and his Round Table, and of the Holy Grail. And Francis longed to go on some chivalrous enterprise, to do great deeds, and see adventures, and win glory and renown.

One day the news of the war came to Assisi, and a noble of the place set out to join Duke Walter with a little troop of men. Here was Francis' chance. He would go too; he was sure that a great future lay before him. He bought a splendid outfit of clothing and arms, but just before starting he saw that one of the band, a poor nobleman, was very badly equipped. Francis was as generous as he was ambitious, so he gave the man his own armour, and took the nobleman's poorer things himself.

At last they started. Francis felt he was really on the way to glory. By and by they came near to Apulia, where Duke Walter was, and the young man hoped the Duke would knight him. But he took fever, and was obliged to stay behind the others at a place called Spoleto. Here as he lay in bed one night, he seemed to hear a voice asking him where he was going. He said he was going to Apulia to be a knight. Then the voice said, "Tell me, Francis, who

can benefit you most; the Lord or the servant?" "The Lord," he replied. "Then," said the voice, "why do you desert the Lord for the servant, and the prince for his vassal?" Thereupon Francis asked, "Lord, what do you wish me to do?" and the voice replied, "Go back to your home; there it shall be told you what you are to do."

So Francis awoke, and in the morning he rose and went back to Assisi, leaving behind him his hopes and ambitions. Two voices were struggling in him, one bidding him go on and seek worldly success and pleasure, the other bidding him enter the service of a heavenly Master. He knew he could not do both. It was a wicked age. The rich cared far too much for pleasure and luxury and the poor were oppressed and trodden down. Francis had been dissatisfied before with the careless life he was living, and now he saw he could not serve two masters. He felt he could not serve God while he was living at home, and mixing with his old gay careless companions.

So Francis gave up all. He left his home and friends, and forsaking all his old ambitions he went about preaching the gospel. Some others joined him and they made themselves into an Order of Friars, called the Friars Minor, or Little Brothers, afterwards better known as Franciscans. They had no property, no clothes but what they wore, and they lived on broken scraps of food given them in charity. They had no money except what they worked for, or what was given them. Their business

in life was to preach and tell everyone of God's goodness and of the need of repentance.

Yet in all his poverty and hardship St. Francis, as he was afterwards called, was full of joy and gladness, and he went on his way singing. He told his disciples to be always cheerful. "Let those who belong to the devil hang their heads—we ought to be glad and rejoice in the Lord," he said.

To everybody there comes a choice of master. You cannot serve two masters equally well. You cannot love them both alike. You are not obliged to choose, like St. Francis, between your home and beggary, but you must choose to which master you will give your love.

Will you choose the service of God and of your fellow-men, or will you choose the way of self-will and self-pleasing?

OUR SISTERS THE BIRDS.

Behold the birds of the heaven.—Matt. vi. 26.

You have heard how St. Francis of Assisi left his home and his friends and all his possessions and set out to be a missionary. To-day I want to tell you something of his love for all God's creatures and especially for the birds.

St. Francis loved everything God had made. He loved water and fire and light. He could never bear to have a candle extinguished or a lamp put out. He loved the flowers and the beasts and the birds, and he called them his little brothers and sisters. In the convent garden there must always be a place for his "brothers the flowers" as well as for the vegetables and herbs. If he saw an earthworm lying twisting about in the middle of the road he would lift it and carry it to the side lest it should be crushed. In winter he put honey into the beehives for the bees to feed on. He cared for the young robins, he built nests for the turtle-doves, and the birds trusted him so completely that they would come and settle on his hands and head.

Every creature, every work of creation was to St. Francis like the word of God. He held all created

things as holy, and reverenced them accordingly. The rocks and cliffs spoke to him of God's everlasting strength and power; the flowers and birds revealed the Heavenly Father's beauty and purity and tenderness. He felt God's presence everywhere among His creatures.

But it is especially of St. Francis' love for the birds that I wish to speak to-day, and I want to tell you two quaint old legends about the monk and the birds.

One day, it is said, St. Francis and another Brother came to a place called Alviano to preach, and stopped in the market-place. It was evening and the swallows were circling to and fro among the walls and turrets, and darting with glad little cries in and out of their nests under the eaves.

The two Friars, as was their custom, sang their evening hymn of praise, and the people stood round silent and expectant. The swallows alone refused to keep silence. Lower and lower they circled over the market-place, and their twittering and cries increased until they drowned every other sound. At last St. Francis looked up and gently addressed them. "My sister swallows," he said, "it seems to me that the time has come when I should have a chance to speak; now you have said enough! Hear therefore God's word and keep still and quiet while I preach!" Immediately the birds were silent, and they made no sound so long as Francis preached.

The other legend tells how St. Francis once preached a sermon to the birds. One day the monk saw in a field near the roadside some trees; and on the trees as well as on the ground beneath them was a great multitude of birds such as had never been seen in that region.

When St. Francis saw the birds he told his followers that he was going to preach to his feathered brothers.

He walked into the field and went to the place where they were. As soon as he began to preach, all the little birds that were on the trees fluttered down and sat round him listening. And St. Francis told them that they should always be grateful to God and praise and love Him because He had given them the power to fly, and food, and clothing, and shelter. Then all the little birds began to open their beaks and to beat their wings and to bow their heads reverently to earth. And they sang a song of praise to show St. Francis that his words had pleased them greatly.

Boys and girls, these old legends come to us covered with the dust of ages, and queerly twisted and turned by the fingers of superstition. But at the heart of most legends there is a grand and simple truth.

And I think the story of St. Francis' life and the quaint tales that are related of him carry some grand truths with them.

They tell us of God who puts His heart of love into each thing He creates. They teach us to reverence

the creatures He has so wonderfully made, and to treat them always with love and kindness. Above all, they teach us to reverence and praise Him who is so marvellous in all His works and who has given us so richly all things to enjoy.

THE STRAIT GATE.

Enter ye in at the strait gate.—Matt. vii. 13 (AV).

HAVE you ever noticed that if a story is told of someone who has performed a very difficult task, ever so many young people want to imitate him? The story of the martyrs is a great example of this. Men heard of fires having been kindled here and there over Scotland and England, and the thought that there was no faith like that for which the martyrs were having to die burned within them. And you boys and girls must have heard how, during the Great War, young lads were led to enlist by reading of wounds and battles and sufferings. During that war boy scouts felt that at last scouting meant something; girl guides became more in earnest than ever. It is born in us, this wanting to do something that is not easy.

Christ knew it. He had more than one reason for telling the people that it was a hard thing to follow Him. He drew an imaginary picture of two roads, one strait—that is, narrow—the other wide. "Enter ye in at the strait gate," He said. "Choose it because it is narrow. In the end you will find that it leads to Life Eternal." The other road, He said, was that taken by the easy-going people. They did as they liked upon

it; they troubled about nothing; but that road led to destruction.

Now there are three things I want you to remember about the narrow way.

1. The entrance to the narrow way is through the narrow gate, and it is low as well as narrow. So we must enter it very humbly. There are on some of the northern moors very narrow openings that lead into long winding passages. These are the "Picts' houses" of which some of you may have read. The only way to get into them is to go down upon one's knees. And that is just how we must enter the strait gate.

2. The way is narrow but it is safe. There is a strange island fortress off the coast of Normandy. It stands on a rock in the midst of a wide bay. A little narrow causeway leads across the sands to the fortress. On each side of the causeway are treacherous sinking sands. If you were to step from the causeway on to these sands, you would be engulfed in a moment. The only safe way is the narrow way of the causeway.

And the safe way leads to the safe place. It leads us to the Father's home in Heaven.

3. The way is narrow but it is not lonely; for Jesus Himself walks there. And whatever the road may bring us we have nothing to fear, for He is by our side, ready and willing to help us.

There is a very fine story told in one of Browning's poems. Let me tell it to you.

There was once a big sea fight between the ships of England and those of France, and the few French ships that were left after the battle wanted to get into the harbour, away from the fleet that was pursuing them. When they got some pilots from shore, however, they declared it impossible to take those big war-vessels in, the way was so narrow. But a sailor, Hervé Riel by name, stood up and said they were all wrong. He knew the channel well, and could take the whole fleet past all the rocks and shoals right up the river mouth to the place where they would be in safety. You know that a pilot is always needed to find the channel, for although there is a broad sheet of water to look at, the stream winds about, and there are banks of mud in some places and rocks in others. Well, Hervé Riel took the biggest ship, made the others follow exactly in its wake, and got them all through without any of them touching the ground. There they were safe from English ships, for these did not know the way.

Do you understand what the story means? I think you do. Jesus Himself said, "I am the way." He is ready to be your pilot. Ask Him this very morning to lead you in the way everlasting.

LET HIM WHO LOVES ME FOLLOW ME.

He saith unto him, Follow me.—Matt. ix. 9.

About four hundred years ago a great war for the possession of Italy was raging between the king of France and the king of Spain. The war was long and fierce. The French were very brave, but they were not a match for the Spaniards. The Spanish soldiers were tried veterans who had had great experience in war, and they had a leader called Gonsalvo di Cordova, who had gained great fame by his victories.

The French were defeated in more than one battle, and lost bit by bit the possessions they had gained. Then King Louis of France made his own nephew, Gaston de Foix, their leader. Gaston was only twenty-three, very young to be the commander of an army, but already he was known as a gallant soldier. His well-known bravery, and their love and admiration for him, gave new hope and courage to the French forces. In two battles they gained the victory over the Spaniards, but in the third, which was fought at Ravenna, just when they seemed to have gained the day, a fierce attack was made by the famous Spanish infantry.

The French wavered, and seemed about to break. Only a desperate effort could save them. Gaston wished to lead another charge against the enemy, but his officers surrounded him and begged him not to try it, saying it was hopeless, and meant certain death. He broke away from them, however, and, shouting, "Let him who loves me follow me," he charged. And at his call the French rallied and pressed after him. The Spaniards gave way before their fierce onslaught, and the victory was to the French.

But it had cost the life of their leader. The brave young Gaston lay dead on the field, and with him a great many of the noblest of his army, who loved him so well that they followed him to death. But he had gained the victory, and those who loved him and followed him had shared his glory as well as his fate.

Boys and girls, nearly two thousand years ago Someone went about Palestine saying very much the same thing as Gaston—"Follow me." He said it to His disciples Simon and Andrew, He said it to James and John, He said it to Matthew the tax-gatherer. He said it to many another besides. Some, like the disciples, left all to follow Him. Some, like the rich young ruler, turned sadly away because they loved something better than Christ. They lost their grand opportunity to live with Him, to work with Him, to learn of Him, and to fight with Him the evil that was in the world.

But Christ did not cease saying, "Follow me" when

He died on Calvary. He is saying the same words still. Every day, every hour of our life He keeps calling, calling, "Let him who loves me follow me."

Well, what are we going to do about it? Are we going to let Him call and never answer. Are we going to turn rudely away. Or are we going to say, "I will follow Thee to the end of the world and ever after"? I wonder.

MATTHEW THE PUBLICAN.

Matthew the publican.—Matt. x. 3.

THERE are four lists of Christ's apostles given in the New Testament—one in Matthew, one in Mark, one in Luke, and one in the Acts, and in each of them you find the name of St. Matthew. But in one of the lists —that in Matthew's Gospel—you find after the name the words "the publican."

You must often have noticed the word "publican" in the New Testament. You find it again and again, and always in a connection that shows how little the publican was respected. Publicans and sinners are often spoken of together, and when the Jews wished to say something very bad about Jesus they said, "He is a friend of publicans," "He eats with publicans and sinners."

Now this word publican has quite a different meaning in the Bible from what it has among ourselves. It has nothing to do with the sale of strong drink. The publican in the Bible is a tax-collector.

But why should tax-collectors be spoken of as the lowest of men, and as great sinners? We often find it hard to pay taxes. Yet we do not speak of our tax-

collectors and custom-house officers as though they were not fit to be known. If these taxes had been paid to a Jewish king or prince reigning at Jerusalem, the Jews would have felt differently about them. But the people of Palestine were paying taxes to a foreign power. They were at this time under the Roman Empire, and they felt very bitterly having lost their independence. They were the people of Jehovah; the Romans were heathen, who brought heathen ways among them, and compelled them to pay taxes to support a hated government.

And not only were the taxes paid to Rome, but they were very heavy. The reason was this. The Roman Empire was divided into provinces or districts, and the right to collect taxes in a district was sold by the government to the highest bidder. That is, a man said, "I will give you so much if you give me the right to collect and keep the taxes in such a place," and the man who offered most got the post.

Now these men offered money for the post of publican that they might make money by it; and all the money they could raise above what they paid for the taxes was profit to themselves. So they squeezed money out of people in every way they could think of. They made the taxes as heavy as they could, and did many dishonest things in order to get as much profit as possible. The great publicans employed other men to collect the taxes for them through the country, and these other men all acted in the same way. They cheated and overcharged whenever they got the chance.

Thus a publican was always thought of as a dishonest person. There was a proverb which said that bears and lions might be the fiercest of the wild beasts in the forests, but publicans and informers were the worst in the cities.

You see, then, why the Jews hated the publicans. And when a Jew became a publican it was a terrible offence. He was a traitor to his country by collecting Roman taxes, and by extorting money from his own people. Besides, he had to break the Sabbath. Those who were not Jews did business on the Sabbath, and he had to be ready to examine goods and charge duty on that day, just as on any other day.

You can imagine how the Jews felt towards a man who did work like that. He was a disgrace to his family and his town. If we could imagine our country conquered by a heathen people who oppressed us with taxes, and insulted our religion, we should understand how the Jews felt towards anyone of their countrymen who became a publican.

Now Matthew was a publican. He sat in a little wooden hut near the Sea of Galilee, and collected the money due to him. There was a great deal of traffic on the Lake and in the towns round it. People were always coming and going, and he heard all the news of the countryside being discussed by the people who came to his little office. He heard of the preaching of John the Baptist. He heard that some publicans had gone to him to be baptized, and that John had told

them not to take more money than was due to them. Then he heard of the preaching of Jesus. He heard of His miracles that were done in Capernaum—how the sick were cured, how the paralysed people walked, and how on this very Lake He had made a storm be still. He heard that some men he knew had gone to be followers of the new Teacher. James and John and Simon and Andrew—all fishermen on the Lake—had left their work and followed Jesus.

Perhaps Matthew went one day to listen to Christ, and heard Him speak about the love of God. Nobody loved the publican. Everybody despised him. Yet Jesus said God loved *everybody*. Perhaps he heard Jesus tell men not to be greedy of money or give their hearts to seeking it. That was what he (Matthew) was doing. Making money was all his pleasure in life.

Then one day Jesus Himself passed the publican's office. Very likely He had often passed it before, but this day He stopped and spoke. All He said was, "Follow me." And Matthew rose, and left everything and followed Jesus.

What did Jesus want with a man like that? Of what use would he be? He was not respectable, and would only bring discredit on his Master. But Jesus had looked deep into the heart of Matthew. He saw that he was ashamed of his life and wanted to leave it. He saw that he needed God's love and forgiveness. And that was the kind of man He always wanted. There was no one so low or so much despised that Christ could not take him and use him. He saw good

where nobody else saw it, and He did not care about public opinion. While people said, "Ah, He has taken that publican to be His companion now," He knew that Matthew was going to be a faithful disciple and spread the knowledge of the Saviour throughout the world.

We do not know much about Matthew's after-life. During Christ's life on earth he was always with Him, but after His death we hear no more about him. There are traditions that he went to distant countries as a missionary, and died a martyr.

We owe one of our Gospels to Matthew, and there are some things in it that are not in any of the others. It was Matthew who kept this beautiful saying of Christ for us—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." And it is in Matthew's Gospel only that we are told that he was a despised publican.

There are two things for us to learn from the story of Matthew.

1. *There is good in everybody*, however much appearances may be against them. It often happens that people would gladly be different, but they do not know how to begin, and their circumstances make it difficult. We must be careful not to judge people by what they

seem, because God, who sees them as they truly are, and loves them, often judges very differently. There is nothing so ugly and dirty looking as coal-tar, but out of it can be made beautiful and brilliant dyes.

There was once a tinker who lived in Bedford. He was so given to swearing that everybody was shocked to hear him. Yet God called him and he followed; and he became the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*—John Bunyan.

2. *It is love that wins people.* While people despised and hated him Matthew was a hard, selfish man, but when Jesus loved him and showed him that He wanted him his heart was softened.

The people who bring out the best in you are not those who look at your bad points but those who look at your good points. Their belief in you helps you to be better. Always look for the good in people and you will find it even where you do not expect it.

There was once a little girl who was so naughty that she had to be removed from several schools. Her teachers said she was so troublesome that they could not keep her. At last she went to a school where she did very well indeed. When someone asked her what the explanation was, she said, "They were so good to me that I was ashamed to be bad any longer."

SERPENTS AND DOVES.

Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.—Matt. x. 16.

HAVE you ever noticed how often Jesus spoke about dumb animals? He seemed to love them and understand them better than anyone else did. When He was a boy He must have wandered often among the hills and vales of Galilee, and I expect there wasn't a thing that boys know about birds and beasts that He didn't know. He knew how each bird made its nest, the numbers and the colour of the eggs, and how long the little birds took to hatch and grow up. He knew where the foxes had their holes, and the wild beasts their dens. He knew much more than ordinary boys do, for with those wonderful eyes of His which could look right into the very hearts of men, He could see also into the minds of the creatures God had made, and could read all their little joys and cares and sorrows.

And so it is not strange that when Jesus was talking to the people, He often spoke to them about the birds and beasts. When He wanted to let them know how much God loved them, He told them of the lost sheep whom the Good Shepherd went to seek. When

He would have them understand how God watched over each one of them, He drew a picture of the little common sparrows, not one of whom fell to the ground without His Father's seeing it. When they were anxious about this world's goods, He spoke of the ravens whom God fed, and when one man wanted to follow Him without counting the cost, He reminded him that the foxes had holes and the birds of the air their nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay His head.

When Jesus was about to send His disciples on their first mission He again spoke of two dumb creatures. The disciples were going out into a world where they would meet with many temptations and many rebuffs, and He cautioned them to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Now why did Jesus tell His disciples to be like serpents? Well, of course it wasn't the wickedness of the serpent He was thinking of, nor the harm it could do with its poisoned fangs. Perhaps nobody but Jesus would have found something good to say about the serpent. But He did find something good in it as He found good in everybody. He told His disciples to imitate the *wisdom* of the serpent. The serpent is especially wise in protecting itself from its foes. Sometimes it makes itself look like the branch of a tree, sometimes it hides in the hot sand with only its head visible, sometimes it lies among the long grass, or at the bottom of a pool.

Jesus knew that He had set His disciples a difficult task and that they would need all their head as well as all their heart to carry it out. Many people were against them. Although they were not to be cowards, they were not to run unnecessary risks. And they were not to spoil their cause by needlessly and foolishly setting up people's backs. Many men and women have ruined a good cause by allowing their enthusiasm to run away with their judgment.

But although they were to be wise as serpents they were also to be "harmless as doves." Harmless just means simple or innocent. Like the dove they were to be pure, and gentle, and faithful. They were not to give anyone a real reason to speak ill of them. They were not to avenge themselves.

Jesus wants all His followers, like the first disciples, to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." He wants all-round boys and girls. Some people are like trees that have grown all to one side. They are not beautiful because they are undeveloped. The best people grow out on every side. Christ wants us to use all our powers for Him.

1. First, He wants us to be "wise as serpents." He wants us to use our head as well as our heart.

We have to be wise *for our own sakes.* The world is not all a good place. There are bad things in it as well as good, and we have to be watchful to discern the good from the evil, and to avoid the evil.

Once an earthenware pot and a brass pot stood side

by side on the bank of a river. One day the river rose after rain and the pots were carried far out into the middle of the stream. As it bobbed up and down, the earthenware pot dreaded lest it should be shattered by a blow from the brass pot. But the brass pot sailed up, all polished and smiling, and said, "Don't be frightened. I shall take care of you." "Thank you," replied the earthenware pot, "all the care I require of you is that you keep your distance. I am not afraid of the stream, but if you come close to me, it will mean my ruin."

There are lots of brass pots sailing about the world. On the surface they look very fine and attractive, but if we come too near them they may be our ruin, and we need the wisdom of the serpent to know them and avoid them.

Then we have to be wise also *for the sake of others.* If we want to help them and do them good we must be wise in the doing of it.

And we have to be wise *for Christ's sake,* for we may do His cause a great deal of harm if we act foolishly.

2. But, secondly, we must be "harmless as doves." We may be wiser than any serpent, but if we are not also as simple as doves our wisdom may turn into cunning. Jesus wants us to use our heart as well as our head.

If we are to be like the dove we must be innocent and pure. Purity is the best shield with which to

face the world. In the *Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan tells how the Shepherds brought the Pilgrims to Mount Innocence and how they saw there a man in a white garment sitting on the hillside. Two men called Prejudice and Ill-will were continually throwing dirt at him, but when the dirt touched his garment it very soon fell off again and left no stain. When the Pilgrims asked the meaning of it the Shepherds told them that the man's name was Godly-man and that he was clad in a robe of innocency. Those others who were throwing dirt hated him for his well-doing, but their labour was all in vain. And the fate of all others who were like him would be as his—God would cause their innocence to break forth as the light, and their righteousness as the noonday.

Jesus Christ Himself was "wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove." No one who trod the earth was ever so pure or so gentle, and no one was ever so wise. Do you remember how cleverly He answered the Pharisees and how wise He was in His dealings with all the people who came to Him? And we can wish for nothing better than just to grow a little liker Him from day to day. Let us ask His help that we also may become "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

SECRETS.

There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.—Matt. x. 26.

THIS is to be the story of a rubbish-heap, and what was found in it.

The rubbish-heap is not in this country, but in Egypt. Far away in Egypt, on the edge of the desert, you may see to-day a little Arab village. It is a poor little place, yet on its site there once stood a flourishing town. That was about two thousand years ago, and there is nothing to be seen of the town now but some mounds where the sand of the desert has blown over the ruins of the fallen houses and completely covered them. And it is among these mounds that our rubbish-heap is. Some years ago a number of explorers went to Egypt to examine the mounds and see what they could find out about the ancient town of Oxyrhynchus, and the people who once lived there.

Now wherever there are people living in a town they have utensils for cooking and for eating. If these are made of pottery they get broken from time to time, and the broken pieces do not decay but may be found centuries after. Thus people know the kind of pottery that was made in those days. But in this

place the explorers found something better than broken pottery. They found a great number of books and writings which had been thrown out as useless. Very likely they were intended for burning, but unless you stir up a bonfire and let in air it will go out. Now a great part of these books and documents had not been touched. They had been covered over with sand, and had remained there ever since. Of course that could not happen in our country because the soil is moist, but in Egypt the climate is so dry that things do not decay, and the sand has preserved the writings perfectly.

These books are not like ours. They are not written on paper, which was not known in Egypt, but on papyrus, which was made from the papyrus plant. This is a tall plant which grows in marshy places and was very plentiful in ancient Egypt. The stem was opened and the pith cut into strips which were laid side by side close together. Then other strips were laid across them and they were pressed firmly together and dried. This made a kind of writing material so durable that it has lasted for thousands of years.

The writings, then, in this rubbish heap were on papyrus, and they were in Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, and other languages. What were they about? Well, what kind of papers do we throw into our waste-paper baskets from time to time? There were old letters, accounts, receipts, tax-papers, diaries, and legal agreements, also exercises written by Egyptian schoolboys. You see that from these writings we can

learn a great deal about the life people led in those days—how they wrote, and thought, and did business. Amongst much that was of little value was found one leaf of a papyrus book containing eight "Sayings of Jesus Christ," and a few more "Sayings" were found written on the back of a business paper. These sayings are very interesting because they are like some in our New Testament; and we know that Jesus must have said many things of which we have not a record. It is very curious that one of these sayings, so long buried in the sand and so strangely found, is, "There is nothing hidden which shall not be revealed, nor buried which shall not be raised."

But of all the writings found that which will interest you most is a letter. It was written by a naughty boy, called Theon, to his father, who had gone to Alexandria without him. Theon had wished very much to go, and, as he was a spoiled boy, he gave a great deal of trouble. His father, in order to get away in peace, pretended he was only going to the town. When Theon found he had been cheated, and that his father had really started on his journey, he sat down and wrote this letter. The writing (which is Greek) is bad, the spelling is bad, the grammar is bad, but the contents are worst of all. For the naughty boy says that unless his father sends for him and takes him with him, he will never speak to him, or write to him, or shake hands with him again. He says he is behaving so badly that he is driving his mother

out of her wits, and that she would be only too glad to pack him off. His father had sent him a present of locust beans to console him, but he despises them. Lastly, he says he will not eat or drink, but will starve himself to death, unless he is taken to Alexandria.

We do not know whether Theon got his way, but his letter was thrown out with the rubbish, and here it is. Perhaps there are still some children like him nearly two thousand years afterwards.

Naughty Theon little knew that his impudent letter would lie hidden for perhaps seventeen hundred years and would then be dug up. He never guessed that his bad conduct would be revealed to the world, his childish writing and his bad spelling photographed and printed in learned books. The things which he thought hid were revealed.

There are some things which you would like very well to be hidden, things which you would rather not remember, things which you would be glad to bury deep under some sand heap. There are little acts of selfishness and greediness and untruthfulness which you are ashamed of. But, like Theon, you are all writing letters every day, and you cannot destroy them. They are not written on paper or papyrus, but they are written all the same, and some day the sand will blow away and the writing will be seen. Every act, however small, makes a mark on your character. Each time it is repeated it makes a deeper mark. Then

something happens — the sand blows off — and the character you have made for yourself is uncovered. When all the writing is seen it reads Truthfulness or Untruthfulness, Trustworthiness or Untrustworthiness, Selfishness or Unselfishness, Greed or Generosity.

Now is the time, when you are children, to take care what you write. It is now that you are making your characters. By the time you are grown up they will be nearly formed, and it will be very hard to change them. Remember that the bad habits you think so little about are becoming a part of you—written on you so that you will find it almost impossible to take out the marks. And if you have made any ugly marks already, ask God now, before you are any older, to give you His big india-rubber of forgiveness and grace to erase them.

DEARER THAN A SPARROW.

Ye are of more value than many sparrows.—Matt. x. 31.

We don't value a sparrow very much, do we? Sparrows are so plentiful, so plain-looking, so cheeky and greedy and quarrelsome, that we are inclined to look down upon them. Of course Mr. Sparrow has his good points. He is a cheery little fellow, and he stays with us all winter when birds of finer feather or sweeter song desert us for warmer climes. And whatever his faults, he is no snob, for he chirps just as brightly in the smoky, dirty city as in the green country lanes.

But if sparrows are numerous and despised here, they are much more so in the land where Jesus lived; for there is perhaps no country in the world where they are more plentiful than in Palestine. There they are to be found in thousands. In the spring-time the trees and shrubs are stuffed full of their nests. They are regarded as a nuisance. They are caught by hundreds in snares and sold to the poor people for food. In Christ's time they were so cheap that two could be bought for a farthing—about one halfpenny in our money—and if you bought two farthings worth one was thrown into the bargain,

just in the same way as in pre-war days the baker sometimes gave five halfpenny buns for twopence.

When Jesus wished to show His disciples how much God cared for them He spoke about the despised sparrows. God gave the sparrows their life, and they are precious in His sight. He enters into all their little joys and troubles. He does not forget any of them, and He notices when even one falls to the ground. Jesus told His disciples not to be anxious and fearful. If God could look after the sparrows, how much more could He care for the men and women and children whom He made in His own image. They were "of more value than many sparrows."

Now I think we can learn two lessons here. And the first is that *we should be kind to the sparrows.*—We should be kind to the sparrows and to all God's creatures, for He made them and He cares for them, and when we ill-treat them we are hurting God.

When George Frederic Watts, the famous artist, was a boy he suffered a great deal from bad health. Often he was obliged to lie in bed for days at a time; and how do you think he amused himself? He made friends with a sparrow. He managed to tame it so well that it would perch on his head as he lay in bed and even eat out of his plate.

There are just two ways we can treat God's creatures. We can be kind to them and make them our friends, or we can be cruel to them and make

them our enemies. Those of you who have pets at home can tell me which is the better way.

And then in the second place our text teaches us *how much God cares for us.*—We are apt to think of God as a Great Being who lives afar off, and who rules the world. We forget that He is very near to every one of us, so close that He hears every sigh we breathe, so close that He sees every tear we shed. God does indeed rule the world and guide the stars in their courses, but He is so great and wonderful that He also knows every one of His children here below.

Some years ago King Edward the Seventh visited Norwich. The school children were drawn up in a line to meet him, and when he passed along they cheered just as loud as ever they could, and they sang "God save the king" with all their heart and soul. But after the monarch had passed by one little maiden was found in floods of tears. The teacher, trying to comfort her, asked, "Didn't you see the king?" "Ye—es," sobbed the mite, "but he did—didn't see *me*!"

An earthly king, no matter how kind and willing he may be, cannot see everybody, but the great King of kings sees and knows and loves each one of us as though that one were the only person in the world. He knows you far more intimately than your father or mother does. He is never too busy looking after the world to forget one of you. It doesn't matter how

plain you are, or how poor, or how little thought of, God cares for you. He cares for the plain, despised sparrow, and He cares far, far more for you.

I'm only a little sparrow,
A bird of low degree;
My life is of little value,
But the dear Lord cares for me.

I know there are many sparrows;
All over the world they are found;
But our Heavenly Father knoweth
When one falls to the ground.

I fly through the thickest forest,
I alight on many a spray;
I have no chart or compass,
But I never lose my way.

I just fold my wings at nightfall
Wherever I happen to be;
For the Father is always watching:
No harm can happen to me.

I am only a little sparrow,
A bird of low degree,
But I know that the Father loves me.
Dost *thou* know His love for *thee*?

AN EASY YOKE.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.—Matt. xi. 29, 30.

If you walked in the fields in Palestine, and watched the ploughing, you would notice that it was done not with horses, as with us, but with oxen. And these oxen, instead of collars such as our horses wear, have on their necks what is called a yoke. It is a straight piece of wood laid across the necks of two oxen. It is made to fit their necks by fixing into it two pairs of wooden pegs, slanting so as to catch the nape of the neck, and it is secured under the neck by a chain or a leather thong. The plough is then fastened with thongs to a ring in the middle of the yoke. The yoke is just the wooden harness which enables the oxen to draw the plough or the cart.

1. The yoke, then, is not a burden on the ox; it is to help it to draw its burden. But if the yoke does not fit, it will hurt the animal. You may often see horses with sores on their necks caused by the collar chafing them. Their yoke is not easy. When Jesus Christ was a carpenter, part of His work would be

to make wooden yokes, and we may be sure He took care to make them fit as well as possible.

Now everybody has some burden to draw in this world, some yoke to bear, for everybody must take a share in the world's work. Life is a serious thing, and we are not put here merely to play. Sometimes grown-up people speak as though children had no burdens. But that is only because they have forgotten. You know best your own troubles, but I am sure you have some. Perhaps you have work or lessons to do which you do not like. Perhaps you feel stupid, or shy. Perhaps you have some bad habit which you are trying hard to break. The burden must be drawn somehow, but a great deal depends on the kind of harness you are wearing. Christ offers you a yoke to help you to draw, and He says it is "easy." It will not hurt you, it will help you, for, as somebody once said, "It is lined with love."

2. Did you notice that when I was describing a yoke I spoke of oxen, not *an ox*? That was because a yoke is made for two, not one. And it is the same with the yoke which Christ offers you. It is made for two. He is one and you are the other. If you take this yoke He shares it with you and carries half the burden. No wonder then that His burden is light. If you love Him, and He loves you, and you both pull together, the burdens of life will be less than half as heavy. Love itself will lighten the load.

A little girl was seen struggling along with a great heavy baby in her arms. "Isn't he too heavy for you?" asked a lady who was passing. "Na," was the reply; "he's ma brither."

3. But there is one important thing we must not forget. It is this. If you look at to-day's text again you will see that Christ says "and learn of me." What does that mean?

Do you know how they teach a young ox to bear the yoke? They choose a steady, well-trained ox for one-half of the yoke, and they put the other half of the yoke on the neck of the young beast. When it feels the pressure on its neck it begins to rear and plunge. It even tries to lie down. It kicks out wildly behind, but that does not mend matters; for the man who guides the team has a long iron-tipped stick called a goad, and when the ox kicks it kicks against the goad and pricks itself badly.

But all this time the other ox is going steadily on, and by and by the young beast realizes that it is only hurting itself by rebelling. It finds that the more it struggles the more the yoke galls, and that the more it kicks the worse the goad pricks. So at last it submits and falls into step with its companion. And then it finds that the very thing that seemed difficult is easy, and that what hurt is a help.

Boys and girls, it is the same with us, whether we be young or old. If we try to throw off life's yokes and refuse to carry life's burdens we shall be

as miserable as that stupid young ox. We have got to learn from Christ how to carry them. We have got to imitate Him. He alone can teach us how to bear the yoke that is easy and carry the burden that is light.

He will show us the way. And helping us and showing us the way, He will see that our burden is never too heavy for us. Two little boys were helping to spring-clean the books in their father's study. "See here, Jim," said the elder to the younger "that pile of books is too heavy for you." "No, it's not," sturdily replied Jim. "Daddy gave it me, and he knows 'xactly how much I can carry." Yes, boys and girls, never doubt it. If you are wearing Christ's yoke and bearing His burden He knows exactly how much you can carry, and He will see that your burden is never too heavy for you to bear.

TREASURE TROVE.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field.—Matt. xiii. 44.

Not long since some of us were very much interested to read about the wonderful treasure that had been discovered on Mr. Balfour's estate at Whittinghame in East Lothian. On the side of a hill is an old camp, and for some years men had been digging on this camp to find out what traces had been left by the men who occupied it more than fifteen centuries ago. And one day they came upon a pit which contained a most marvellous treasure—the most wonderful treasure that has ever been found in this country. It consisted of silver vessels of all kinds—bowls, and plates, and chalices, and flagons, and spoons, along with many old coins. Some of the vessels seemed to have been stolen from monasteries on the Continent and the whole treasure had evidently been hidden there by pirates who in some way were prevented from returning.

Such finds are rare in this country, but they are fairly frequent in Palestine.

Every now and then we hear of the discovery there of strange old vaults and tombs which have lain buried for hundreds—even thousands—of years. We read of

old urns and vases being upturned, of chests of gold coins being found under the soil.

There is more than one reason why Palestine is so rich in treasure. It was a land frequently visited by earthquakes, and in the upheavals much that was valuable was hidden and lost. Again, in ancient times it was often invaded, and there were also many quarrels between tribe and tribe. The safest bank was Mother Earth, and in times of disturbance men concealed their treasure in the ground. Very often these men were killed or died in exile, and their secret died with them. Ages later some fortunate ploughman tilling the soil came upon the golden store.

It was of such a man that Jesus spoke in His parable of the hid treasure. A poor ploughman was one day busy in his master's field. Suddenly his ploughshare struck something hard. It was an old chest containing precious coins. What a grand discovery—a discovery that would make him rich beyond his wildest dreams! It was worth while giving up everything he possessed to make it his. So the man went home, and sold all that he had to buy the field in order that all it contained might be his.

Now seeking for earthly treasure is not always a good thing. It has sometimes awakened the worst passions of men—greed, covetousness, jealousy, hatred. Men have killed each other to get gold; men have sometimes taken their own lives when they had spent their last penny in a vain search for treasure.

And the quest for gold has often caused great misery. Away back in the Middle Ages gold was discovered in Bohemia. And do you know what happened? Many of the peasants gave up farming for mining, and as there were not enough people left to till the soil, there were frequent famines in the land. Don't you think, to these peasants, gold would be a poor exchange for bread?

But there is one Treasure that can do us only infinite good. It lies near to all of us and it is so precious that if all the world were ours it would be worth giving up that, and much more, to gain it. Yet although this wonderful Treasure has been so close beside us for years, although it is ours for the taking, some of us have not yet discovered it, and some of us have heard about it but have not tried to make it ours because we have not realized its preciousness.

Have you ever heard the story of how the Koh-i-noor diamond was lost and found again? It was once the largest diamond in the world, and it was presented to Queen Victoria by the East India Company. When it was first received it was given into the keeping of Sir John Lawrence. He was rather an absent-minded man, and, being busy and anxious at the time, he slipped the little box which contained the jewel into his waistcoat pocket. Then he went on his way and forgot all about it.

Six months later, a message came from Queen Victoria ordering that the gem should be sent to her at once. Then Lawrence remembered his carelessness.

He called his native servant and asked him if he had found a little box in one of his pockets some months before. Oh yes, the man had found the little parcel and put it in one of the Sahib's boxes. Search was made, and the parcel was found. But what do you think the old servant said? He had not in the least realized the value of the jewel he had had in his hands. "It is nothing, Sahib," said he—"nothing but a bit of glass."

Have you guessed the name of the wonderful Treasure that is offered to us all? It is the Treasure of Christ's love. It is ours for the taking, but some of us have not yet realized how very precious it is, and we throw away this wonderful jewel as if it were "a bit of glass."

Will you go back for a minute to the story of the parable? What would you have thought of the ploughman if, when he found the treasure, he had said, "Oh, it's not worth bothering about; why should I sell my belongings to possess it?" What would you have thought of him if he had covered it up, and gone on with his ploughing, and remained a poor labourer all his life?

Well, that is what some people are doing with Christ's Treasure. They think it is not worth troubling about, or that they would have to give up something they like very much to possess it.

And there *are* some things we must give up if we would follow Jesus. We must give up everything mean, and dishonest, and unworthy; we must give up bad companions, and bad habits, and bad thoughts;

but He will help us to give them up, and He will pay us back a thousandfold for all we renounce for His sake.

And now I want you to think what Jesus gave up to win His treasure. For Jesus has a treasure too—the treasure of our souls—yours and mine. To gain them He left His beautiful home and came down to earth to live among men and to suffer with them. To gain them He endured a shameful death upon the Cross. He bought them with a price—the price of His love, and life, and death. But He cannot possess them unless we yield them up. Are we going to deprive Jesus of His treasure?

THE PEARL.

Goodly pearls.—Matt. xiii. 45.

THE stone usually given to October is the opal; but unfortunately the opal is not mentioned in the Bible, so we shall have to find a gem to take its place. What do you say to the precious stone of the sea—the pearl?

Pearls have always been treasured by man, and a pearl is the very first jewel mentioned in the oldest writings we know. A Chinese dictionary which is over three thousand years old has a word which means "pearl." When you come to think of it this is quite natural, for a pearl is a ready-made gem. It does not require the cutting that other gems do before they look brilliant. It is lovely without any help of man. In olden days they had not the instruments we have for cutting and polishing precious stones, so they prized the pearl as the queen of gems, and put it at the top of the list.

History tells us that it was because of the pearls which abounded in its rivers, that the Romans came to Britain. The Latin name for the pearl was *margarita*. From that we take the name Margaret. So you see there are quite a number of pearls here to-day.

Long ago people thought that pearls were drops of dew made solid. They said that these drops of dew

fell from heaven, but how the dewdrops got into the oyster shell they could not quite explain.

Nowadays we know better. We know that when an oyster or mussel shell is open a little grain of sand floats in. The oyster feels it horribly gritty and uncomfortable, just as we do if we get a particle of something in our eye. And it does what we do in the same circumstances, it sheds a tear. But the oyster's tears are not like ours—a mixture of salt and water—they are liquid carbonate of lime, and this carbonate of lime hardens into a layer of what is known as *nacre* or *mother of pearl*, the same material as that with which the oyster has already lined its shell. The creature is not content with one covering on the top of the grit. It deposits covering after covering till there is a glistening knob fastened to the shell, and you have what is known as a blister pearl.

The perfectly round pearls are made in a slightly different way. It is not a grain of sand but a tiny worm that is the cause of them. This impertinent little worm is floating around in the water looking out for a comfortable home, and when it spies an open shell, in it pops, and immediately begins to bore its way into the poor oyster's body. The oyster's only way to protect itself is to enclose it with pearl, so it sets to work, and by and by you have a perfect round, the most valuable sort of pearl.

The Chinese have taken advantage of this habit of the oyster. They make little flat tin images of Buddha, open a shell, and thrust one in. After a time they open

the shell again, and the little tin image is now a shining pearly idol.

The finest pearls are found off the north-west coast of Ceylon, but some lovely specimens come from our own Scottish rivers. These last are mussel pearls, and you can recognize them easily, for they have a pinkish-bluish hue very much like the colour of a soft evening sky. You see pearls are not all creamy. There is even a black pearl; but it is very rare. Pearls are of all sizes, from those like a tiny pin head, known as "seed" pearls, to the great pearl in the South Kensington Museum in London which measures two inches in length and four and a half round about. But it is not size only that counts. Shape and sheen count too. And the sheeniest pearl is the loveliest. That is why the most beautiful pearl in the world is said to be one in the Moscow Museum. It is so exquisitely sheeny that one to rival it has not been found.

One particularly lovely pearl lies, they say, buried beneath the waters of the canal at Venice, and its story makes us think of Christ's parable of the merchantman and the pearl of great price. This pearl was found in the sixteenth century by a certain Venetian Jew who was a merchant of pearls. He went to the East to look for them, and after wandering many years and undergoing many dangers he returned to Venice with a number of fine gems. He sold them all except one pearl of immense size and extraordinary beauty on which he set so high a value that nobody

was willing to buy it. Finally he invited all the gem dealers in Venice to meet him on the Rialto. There he offered them for the last time his glorious jewel. The dealers, thinking no doubt that he would lower the price, once more refused to buy. What was their horror and amazement when the Jew turned round and threw the pearl into the canal? He preferred to lose it rather than cheapen it.

The pearl's message seems to me to be as beautiful as the pearl itself. I think it says to us, "Be a pearl-maker." That is just another way of saying, "Be a peacemaker." A peacemaker goes about trying to smooth away all the roughness and the disagreeableness that he meets. You don't need to wait for a quarrel to be a peacemaker. You can be a peacemaker or pearl-maker in so many different ways.

1. *Be a pearl-maker to yourself.*—There are lots of disagreeable tasks and duties that come to us day by day. The oftener we meet them the less we like them. Well, it is no use kicking against them; you have to do them, and the easiest way is to throw over them a pearly covering of imagination. Say to yourself, "I'm going to pretend this is the very nicest job in the world." You'll be astonished to find how bearable the hateful duty is in its pearl dress. Try the same plan with your worries. It is as good for them as it is for the disagreeable duties.

2. Then *be a pearl-maker for others.*—Smooth away

their difficulties. Cover them with a coating of your pearl solution. That is to say, do what you can to help them out of their troubles.

Be a pearl-maker when you come across a quarrel. Smooth industriously at that quarrel till you have turned it into a pearl of peace and love.

Be a pearl-maker when you hear a nasty story or an unkind word about another boy or girl. Bury that story deep as the oyster does the worm, under layer after layer. Never let it see the light again. Be like the little girl I read of the other day. As her mother was tucking her into bed at night the comfy way mothers do, the little maid said shyly, "Mummy, I was a peacemaker to-day." "Were you, dear?" said mother. "Did you settle somebody's quarrel?" "Oh no," said the little girl, "I wasn't that kind of peacemaker. I just knew something and didn't tell."

Boys and girls, there's nothing finer. Start making pearls this very day.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Gen. ii. 12; Job xxviii. 19; Prov. iii. 15; Jer. xvii. 1; Ezek. i. 26, xxvii. 16 (2), xxviii. 13; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

THE HEART OF A CHILD.

Jesus called a little child unto him.—Matt. xviii. 2 (AV).
And when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them.—Mark ix. 36 (AV).

To-day's sermon is about a little boy whose name we don't know, but about whom we read twice in the Bible. We can make a guess at his name, however, for we rather think—although the Bible does not exactly tell us so—that his father's name was Simon, and in all probability the little fellow was named after his father. He lived in a town called Capernaum. His father was a fisherman, so was his Uncle Andrew, who lived with them. He had a good mother too, and a kind Granny who knew just what small boys liked to eat and who often gave him goodies.

But besides these nice relatives he had a special Friend, a perfectly splendid Friend, who often came to stay in the house. When He arrived He was sometimes very tired, because He had been so busy all day, but He was never so tired as not to be ready to speak to Simon. He was a wonderful man, this Friend. Father said He preached better than any of the learned Jewish Rabbis, and He could cure sick

people too. When the doctors and everybody else had given up hope He could make a sick person well with a word. Simon himself had seen Him do it. It was only a little while ago that Granny was very ill. She had been tossing and moaning on her bed with fever, and mother had been terribly worried about her, and this marvellous Friend had merely touched her with His cool hand, and she had been quite well all in a minute. Why! she had risen and made an extra fine dinner for the whole household, just to prove how well she was, and how glad she was to be so.

Then the Friend knew exactly what children liked to play at. He was always ready to share in a game. He could do extraordinary things with His fingers too. With a knife and a piece of wood and a hammer and some nails He could make you such splendid toys. Granny said that was because He had been a carpenter. And after you were tired playing games with Him or watching Him make toys, He was always ready to take you on His knee and tell you stories. And what stories they were! You simply held your breath and listened hard. Father was a fine man, and Uncle Andrew was a good sort, but there was nobody—nobody in all the world—to compare with the Friend.

When He came to the house little Simon hung around fascinated. He could not tear himself away. He was a quiet little fellow, so he was often allowed to stay in the room whilst the Friend talked to the

men whom He usually had with Him. (Mother called them His disciples. Father was one, so was Uncle Andrew.) Simon could not understand all the Friend said, but it sounded very beautiful, and it made Simon long to be old enough to become a disciple too.

One day he remembered especially well. They had all come in from a long walk looking rather overheated and cross—all except the Friend!—He never was cross! The Friend had turned to them and said, "What were you reasoning about on the way?" Simon thought that an extremely polite way of putting it, for the disciples looked as if they had been having a downright quarrel. When the Friend asked them this question, however, they had all looked rather caught and had got redder than before. Then the Friend had sat down, as all Rabbis did when they were going to teach their followers, and the disciples had gathered round in an ashamed bunch, for they knew that the Friend had guessed the secret of their quarrel. Then the Friend had turned round and smiled to little Simon, who was hanging about as usual in the background, and stretching out His hand towards him, had said, "Come, Simon." And Simon had run forward gladly at the call and had climbed up (he was such a wee fellow, you know) on the Friend's knee, and the Friend had put an arm round him and had turned and said to Father and Uncle Andrew and all those great tall men, "Friends, you were questioning as you came along which of you should have the first place in the Kingdom of

Heaven. I tell you that you have to enter that Kingdom before you can talk of being first or last. And I tell you also that the only way to enter it is to become like little Simon here. You must love Me as he loves Me, you must trust Me as he trusts Me, ere you can enter My Kingdom. The man who would be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven must have the heart of a little child."

Of course, boys and girls, you have guessed long ago who little Simon was. He was the little son of Simon Peter. St. Matthew tells us about him and so does St. Mark. They tell us how Christ set him in the midst of these angry men and preached a sermon with his loving child's heart as the text.

And Christ is still preaching that sermon. He is still saying to older people, "Love Me with the heart of a child."

And what is He saying to the children? Is He not asking you to love Him as little Simon loved Him long ago? He knows that if you learn to love Him truly when you are young you will love Him all your days. He knows that the people who don't learn to love Him when they are children find it difficult to enter His Kingdom. They have to do what Christ said His disciples must do; they have to turn and become as little children before they can enter the door of the Kingdom. But the door of the Kingdom stands wide for the children, and though it is a lowly door it is high enough for each loving child.

Are you going to wait till you grow up and you find the entrance difficult? Or are you going to do as Simon did? Are you going to make Christ your special Friend whilst you are still a child? If so, you will cross the threshold of the Kingdom almost without knowing it, and the Friend of little children will be *your* Friend for ever and ever, world without end.

GUARDIAN ANGELS.

In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.—Matt. xviii. 10.

Do you like a story with an angel in it? I do. There is a sort of other-world feeling about an angel story that makes it particularly delightful. The best book I know for angel stories is the Bible. You would be surprised to know how often the Bible speaks of angels, and how much it tells us about them. We learn there that they are God's messengers to men, that they guide and comfort them, warn and protect them. And we learn too that they form a sort of court in Heaven, and that angel choirs are for ever praising God.

Christ often spoke of angels, and one of the most interesting things He said about them is in to-day's text. He told us that little children have guardian angels and that these guardian angels have the special privilege of entrance to God's presence at any moment. "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven," He said. Christ was speaking to Eastern people and they would understand better than we do what He meant by the words "behold the face." In an Eastern court those

who are special favourites of the monarch are allowed to see his face and to stand near his presence, as a mark of great intimacy and confidence. Even in this country we have a custom somewhat similar. Ambassadors of a certain rank can speak to the king only through his ministers, but those of the highest rank have what is called the right of "direct access." They can see the king and speak with him face to face.

Now why should the children's angels have this special privilege? I'll tell you why I think they have it. God gives them this privilege because He specially loves His little ones, and He is anxious that they, who are small and helpless and not able to look after themselves, should get special care and attention. He appoints those guardian angels to watch over the children so that if anybody should try to harm the little ones the angels may report it to Him at once. And He often gives those angels power to ward off danger and keep the children safe. Nobody sees them at their task, but they are busy all the time.

Sometimes God has permitted people to see the children's angels. Shall I tell you a story of how men saw them on one occasion?

It was long ago in Italy. The people of a certain little town called Spinalunza were besieged by enemies from another town called Pisa. The Pisans, who were at the same time at war with Florence, said that all they wanted was a pledge that the Spinalunzans would not join Florence to fight against them.

"What pledge do you ask?" inquired the men of Spinalunza; and the men of Pisa answered, "Let twenty of your children ride back to Pisa with us as hostages." "The children shall march out of the gates to-morrow at daybreak and you may choose the twenty," replied the Spinalunzans. All night the enemy spent the long hours drinking. The children spent them sleeping. Their parents spent them praying. At dawn the gates were thrown wide, and the children trooped out singing and bearing aloft a cross. And lo! behind each child was an angel with a fiery sword. As the band of children and angels swept through the gates the enemy fled panic-stricken. And the Spinalunzans completed the victory by putting them utterly to rout.

But, children, it is not only in danger that your guardian angels care for you. They care for you all the time. They care for you when you are tempted, for instance. When you feel something telling you to turn away from temptation, pleading with you not to do wrong, that is your guardian angel speaking to you. His whole aim is to help you. The worst of it is that sometimes you are not willing to help him. And he can't do everything. You must do so much.

There was once a man who dreamed a strange dream. He dreamed that he had gone to Heaven, and there he saw far off on the heights countless hosts of shining ones whom he guessed to be angels. A nearer look told him they *were* angels; but what

surprised him was to find that, whilst some of them had faces glad and radiant, others looked sad and dispirited. Curious to know the reason of this he summoned up courage to ask who they were. "We are guardian angels," was the reply. "Is my guardian angel here?" inquired the man. "Pass on and you will find," was the reply. Through the white-robed ranks went the man, till his way was barred by an angel with drooping wings and bowed head and a pale tired face. "You were seeking me," said he; "I am your guardian angel." "I am grieved to see you so sad and weary," said the man. "How could it be otherwise?" replied the angel. "All the days of your life on earth I toiled to guard you and help you. But when did you ever aid me in my task? I had to do it all alone."

Boys and girls, what about *your* guardian angel? Are you being fair to him? Are you doing your part? Remember he needs your help as much as you need his.

THE UNGRATEFUL LABOURERS.

And when they received it, they murmured against the householder.—Matt. xx. 11.

ONCE upon a time, there was a householder who had a vineyard. This householder was a very kind man, and the reason why he kept the vineyard was, not that he might get as many grapes as he could out of it and become rich, but that he might give employment to the poor people of the country.

Early in the morning he went out into the market-place where the labourers were waiting to be hired. There he engaged men to come and work in his vineyard all day. Now these particular men were more anxious to get money than to work well, and before they would engage themselves to the householder they made a bargain with him. They "haggled," as we say, about their pay. "Look here," said they, "how much are you going to give us for this job? We want to make sure of our money before we do a stroke of work; and if you don't pay us what we consider enough, there are lots of other masters who will be glad to have us." The householder offered the men the usual wage of a penny a day—a sum equal to ninepence halfpenny

in our money, and the men agreed to work for that sum.

About nine o'clock the lord of the vineyard again went out into the market-place. There were still a good many men standing about waiting to be hired, and them also he sent into his vineyard. But these men did not bargain about what they were to get. They were too thankful to find employment. The householder said to them, "Whatsoever is right I will give you," and, knowing him to be a just and kind man, they trusted him.

At twelve o'clock, and again at three in the afternoon, the householder went to look for more men. But still he was not satisfied. He was anxious that nobody should be left out, and at five o'clock he went for the last time to the market-place. There he found a weary, sad, little group of idle men. They had been waiting for employment through the morning hours, through the burning heat of the day, until the shadows grew long again. Sometimes a householder had spoken to them and then engaged other men; their friends had been taken, and they had been left; and they were sore of heart as they thought of careworn wives and hungry little children at home.

They were just giving up hope when the kind lord came along and asked them why they were standing there idle all day. "Because no man hath hired us," was their answer. And how grateful they were when the householder told them to go into his vineyard! How diligently they worked, and how well,

until the sun set and they were relieved from their task!

Then the lord of the vineyard told his steward to pay the men and to begin with the late-comers. To their amazement they received a penny—a full day's pay. Certainly they had made no agreement, but this was far more than their due, and their hearts overflowed with thankfulness to their kind and generous master.

So it was with the three o'clock men, and the mid-day men, and the nine o'clock men. Last of all came the labourers who had been at work since early morning. They expected that they would get more than the wages agreed upon, and when they also received a penny they began to grumble, and to complain that they had been unfairly dealt with. But the lord knew that they had been thinking of nothing but their wages all day and that they had tried to do as little work as possible for their money. He saw that instead of rejoicing that their unfortunate friends had been so lucky in the end, they were jealous of their good fortune. They had been very keen on bargaining, and they had got all they had bargained for. So the kind lord, instead of giving them anything extra, sent them away with a stern reproof.

Of course we all think these early morning labourers are very mean, shabby sort of men, but are we quite sure we aren't a little bit like them sometimes?

I'm afraid we are not only a little bit, but a very big bit like them when we grumble.

Did it ever strike you that when we grumble about things that don't please us we are grumbling against God? We may think we are grumbling against our father, or our mother, or our teacher, or our friend; but we are really grumbling against God. It is He who gives us all things—our homes, our kind parents, our friends, our food, our books, our toys; and when we grumble about any of them, we are being ungrateful to Him.

Away back in the fourteenth century there lived in the town of Strassburg a great teacher named John Tauler. Now Tauler was a very good man, but he felt he needed further teaching in the ways of God, so he prayed earnestly about the matter for two years.

At the end of that time he was directed to go to a certain church porch on a certain day. There he would find someone to teach him. Tauler obeyed, but when he reached the porch he found no one but a poor beggar.

The preacher felt sure there must be some mistake; however, he made up his mind to address the beggar. So he said politely, "God give you a good day, my friend." To his surprise the man replied, "I thank God, I never had a bad one." Tauler thought he must have misunderstood the beggar, so he tried again. "God give you a happy life, my friend," said he. And the man replied, "I thank God, I am never

unhappy." "Never unhappy!" exclaimed the preacher. "What do you mean?" And the beggar answered, "Why, when it is fine I thank God, and when it rains I thank God; when I have plenty I thank God, and when I am hungry I thank God. And since whatsoever pleases God pleases me, why should I be unhappy?"

Tauler was so astonished at the beggar's words that he asked him, "Who are you?" "I am a king," replied the man. "A king!" exclaimed the preacher. "Where is your kingdom?" And the man answered, "In my own heart."

If you are contented and grateful, you are a king though your clothes be shabby and patched and you live in one room. If you are discontented and ungrateful you are a slave though you be clothed in silk and satin and live in a palace.

Would you like to know a cure for this horrid, black ugly thing called grumbling? Go and do something for somebody else.

One of our novelists tells us the story of the children of a Methodist preacher. They were early taught that "the verb *to be* is of infinite moment, the verb *to do* of great weight, and the verb *to have* of no significance at all." It matters infinitely what *we are*, it matters greatly what *we do*, it matters scarcely at all what *we have*; but we shall not stop worrying about the verb *to have* until we thoroughly know the verb *to do*.

There were once two little girls who lived in a beautiful house in a big city. They had kind parents, beautiful clothes, a motor to ride in, and more toys than they knew what to do with. And yet they were never happy. They had so many nice things and so many pleasures that they did not value them. They were often very bored and they grumbled for something new to do.

One day a grown-up friend took them to a children's hospital. There they saw a great many little boys and girls—all of them much poorer than themselves, some of them suffering a great deal of pain, most of them looking very happy and contented. The little girls were sorry for the sick children. They went back often to see them. They took them flowers, they brought them their toys, and from the day they first went to the hospital they were much happier, and much nicer little girls.

Perhaps you can't all visit a children's hospital, but you can all find somebody less fortunate than yourselves, and do your best to cheer them. It may be a poor child, or an invalid, or an old person; but, whoever it is, you will be doing a Christlike deed and learning the secret of true happiness.

THE ASS THAT COULD NOT BE SPARED.

Go into the village that is over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.—Matt. xxi. 2.

THIS is a verse which has given a great deal of trouble to wise men who study the Bible. And why do you think it has worried them? Because two animals are mentioned in it instead of one! Mark, Luke, and John all tell the same story, but they mention only one beast—the ass's colt. Matthew speaks of two—the ass and the ass's colt.

Now these wise men have brought forward learned reasons why Matthew should differ from the others. But one man[1] had an idea of his own. He went to an old farmer who had a wide knowledge of the ways of animals, and he asked him if there was any reason why the ass should accompany the colt. And the wise old man replied, "Certainly, an unbroken colt simply would not go at all—could not be *made* to go—unless its mother went along with it. It

[1] The idea for this sermon was derived from an article by the Rev. Rayner Winterbotham in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for May 1917.

would be totally unmanageable and useless away from her."

Christ rode only on the colt, so perhaps the other evangelists did not think it worth while mentioning the mother-ass, but Matthew did not forget her.

You can picture the ass and the colt that day when the disciples went to fetch them. They lived in Bethany and they belonged to a man who was a friend of Jesus. (Perhaps that friend was Lazarus whom Christ raised from the dead.) Sometimes Jesus came to visit their master and He never went away without giving a kindly clap to the ass and picking a bunch of nice juicy grass for the colt. And the master used to say, "If you ever want the use of my ass or her foal be sure to send for them. I'll be delighted to lend them."

So the day came when Jesus did have need of the colt. It was the day on which He was to ride into Jerusalem as the King of Peace. And He sent two of His disciples to fetch the beasts with directions where they were to find them and what they were to say to the owner.

When the disciples reached the spot where the animals were tied, they unfastened the ass, and, putting a halter round her neck, led her away. The colt they did not attempt to lead. It went with its mother, trotting and cantering by her side.

But when they reached the highroad where Jesus was waiting a change took place. The halter was taken off the ass, and, insult of insults, was put upon

the colt! He who had always run free had a halter placed round his neck! He who had never borne a saddle or carried a burden had garments laid upon him and was obliged to carry a human being! Trembling with fear and rage the colt refused to move, but just then he heard a soft little bray at his ear. It was his mother telling him that it was all right and to go on, for she would be beside him. Then the Man on his back gave him a kindly clap and an encouraging word, and he recognized the kind voice of that Friend of his master who used to feed him with bunches of grass. He began to walk slowly down the road, and, as he went, his mother ran beside him encouraging him by her presence. By and by, as he gained confidence she stopped now and again to snatch a bite of grass by the roadside, but always she kept near him.

When the crowds gathered to hail Jesus as the Messiah and to lay branches in His path they pushed and jostled the ass. They thought she was only in the way. But the little trembling colt knew better, and the Lord of life Himself knew better. He could see into the heart of the creature and He knew that it needed its mother's presence.

Now, boys and girls, this story of the ass and the ass's colt teaches us a very beautiful lesson—the lesson that the things which seem unimportant cannot be done without. Christ rode upon the colt, but He needed the ass too. He could not have ridden to

Jerusalem at all that day had the ass not come also.

Sometimes we want to do the big, grand things, the things that everybody will talk about, the things that will make a stir in the world. And we forget that if there were nobody to do the little things, the big ones would never be done. It was like that during the Great War, was it not? Our gallant soldiers and sailors and airmen faced the enemy for us; they went through terrible privations and dangers. They did the big, grand things. But they could not have done them had it not been for the people at home doing the little things. They could not have done them had it not been for the men and women who worked in munition and aeroplane factories and in shipbuilding yards, had it not been for the mothers and wives and sisters and children who stayed at home to roll bandages and knit socks and pray.

I want to tell you of one boy who did his bit just by making coffee. His name was Dan Taylor, but they called him "little Dan." He was cabin-boy on board the trawler *Providence* of Brixham in Devon, and there was one thing he excelled in—nobody could make quite such good coffee as he. You shall hear how his gift was put to use.

On New Year's Day, 1915, the *Providence* was out in the English Channel and making for home. A fierce storm was raging and the waves were running twenty feet high. About half-past eleven in the forenoon the third hand sighted a boat in the distance.

It was a naval cutter packed with bluejackets and it seemed to be in distress. He reported the matter to the skipper, and the latter, with great difficulty and danger to himself, turned his vessel and went to the rescue of the cutter. The boat proved to contain sixty-eight survivors of H.M.S. *Formidable*, which had been torpedoed by the Germans very early that morning.

At great risk to themselves the skipper, the mate, and the third hand managed to rescue the shivering men. Some of them were only half-clad, many were in a state of collapse, all of them were soaked to the skin, and none had had anything to eat or drink since seven o'clock the previous evening.

At first "little Dan" helped to hold the end of a rope, but soon an idea struck him. He saw how cold and hungry and wet the men looked, and he thought that the very thing they needed was a cup of hot coffee. So he hustled down to the cabin, and before a bluejacket was got on board he had the water boiling and a big jug of steaming coffee ready!

And how these men enjoyed it! It seemed to put new life into them, and they declared it was the best coffee they had ever tasted. And the more they drank, the more they wanted. So "little Dan" was kept busy brewing coffee until the *Providence* reached Brixham at eight o'clock in the evening.

You will be glad to hear that none of the bluejackets died, and that the doctors declared that "little Dan" had helped to save many a life.

"Little Dan" was too small to rescue drowning men

but he was not too small to make coffee. He was too small to do the big thing, but he was not too small to do the little thing, and he did what he could do.

And, boys and girls, isn't "little Dan's" position very much like yours? You can't go out to business yet and do the difficult work father does; you can't earn money to keep the family, but you *can* make his work lighter for him by being cheerful and obliging. You can't look after the household as mother does, but you *can* help her by running errands and being obedient and loving. And remember that these seemingly unimportant things count tremendously. They can't be done without.

OUR NEIGHBOURS.

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.—Matt. xxii. 39.

You all know what a neighbour is. If you were asked to give the meaning of the word, your quick answer would be, "One who lives near." And that is the right answer, for "neighbour" comes from two words meaning "near" and "a dweller."

Now, Jesus Christ says we are to love our neighbours. But by neighbours He doesn't mean merely the people who live next door or on the same flat. You have other neighbours besides these. You have companions who play or study alongside of you, just as men and women have people who work beside them. Your classmates or your playmates are your neighbours.

With that idea in your mind put this other question to yourself, "Whom do I love best in this world?" I believe most of you would at once answer, "My mother." Others might say, "My baby sister." There would be many answers. I wonder if any of you would have "Myself" on your tongue. I believe some boys and girls really love themselves best. On the other hand, some grown-up people are very unselfish. I know mothers who would give their lives for their boys and girls, and everybody feels

very solemn at the remembrance of the wonderful self-sacrifice of the young soldiers who died for us during the Great War.

To love yourselves best is almost natural for you boys and girls. You are most in the company of your own selves, you know your own faults, and you know your own good qualities. You make excuses for yourselves if you have done wrong. You say, "I was led into doing that mean trick." "I never meant to tell that lie; it was the other fellow's fault." But if you come to know that a companion has done something very mean you condemn him—or her, as the case may be—unmercifully. One thing which it is good for us all to remember is, that to be possessed with a great love for ourselves is to be *selfish*. We cry over our own pains. Are we sorry when our companions suffer? Do we try to put ourselves into their place? Do we give a thought to poor boys and girls who perhaps have very little to eat?

The other day I read of a little girl who stood looking in with hungry eyes at a baker's shop window. A lady passing felt very sorry for her and bought some of the cakes. The little girl received the dainties without a word until, when bidding good-bye, she said, "Be you God's wife?" If boys and girls loved their neighbours, wouldn't the world be a good place to live in?

There is a beautiful legend about loving one's neighbour which I read the other day.

The Rabbis say that once upon a time there were two affectionate brothers who tilled the same farm. On a certain night, after the ingathering of the harvest, one of them said to his wife, "My brother is a lonely man, who has neither wife nor children; I will go out and carry some of my sheaves into his field." It happened that on the same night the other said, "My brother has wife and children, and needs the harvest more than I; I will carry some of my sheaves into his field." So the next morning their respective sheaves were as numerous as before. And thus it happened night after night, until at length one moonlight night the brothers with their arms full of sheaves met midway face to face. On that spot the Temple was built, because it was esteemed to be the place where earth was nearest Heaven.

If we think often of Jesus Christ, who lived His life on earth for us, we shall want to think less about ourselves and more about our neighbours. Love will grow in our hearts for them.

I daresay some of you have heard of a preacher called Henry Drummond. He loved young men very much, and his chief characteristic was forgetfulness of self. One night a man went to him in a difficulty about religion. Henry Drummond asked him, "Have you ever helped anyone?" "No," the man answered. "Well, go now and help somebody. I don't care how or when you do it. Simply do it." That was the comfort offered him by Henry Drummond.

Boys and girls, find someone to be kind to in the playground or at home. I read the other day somewhere that "a man is only half himself till he has found a brother to take care of." And we want you to grow up great and good men and women.

WHAT IS YOUR TALENT?

He also that had received the one talent.—Matt. xxv. 24.

THIS is a sermon for the boys and girls who don't sit at the top of their class in school and are quite sure that they never will sit there. That is just another way of saying that this is a sermon for "one talent" boys and girls. Who are they? They are the boys and girls who often think it isn't worth while trying to do the best they can because they haven't so many brains as some of their classmates and companions. They excuse themselves from doing anything because they can't do everything. It is a grand excuse for laziness, and it is as old as the story of to-day's text and older. It is as old as the world itself.

Did you ever wonder why clever people are called "talented"? The reason is exactly as old as to-day's story. Christ told a tale about a certain great man who was leaving the country for some time and who gave to his servants before he left certain sums of money, telling them to trade with them in his absence. The first was given five talents, the second two, the third one. You know what happened in the end of

the day. When, after a long time, the great man returned, he called these servants to him and asked them what they had done with the money. The five talent man had gained other five talents, the two talent man had added two to his two, but the one talent man brought his one talent back with a whining excuse that he hadn't done anything with it but bury it in the earth, because he was afraid he might lose it if he tried to use it.

Of course that story which Christ told was more than a mere interesting tale. It was a story with a deep meaning. Christ was talking in a picture or parable, and He meant that God gives to every man, woman, and child in the world certain gifts, certain abilities. He makes them able to do certain things and He expects them to use these abilities. He expects them to make the very most of them.

This story of the talents took such a hold of people's minds that gradually the picture word "talent"—which meant a weight of gold equal to £240—came to be applied to the God-given gifts and abilities about which Christ was really speaking. So that to-day, when we speak of "a man of many talents" or of "a talented man," we don't mean a man who owns a lot of gold but a man who is brilliantly clever and can do a great many different things exceedingly well.

Now I have a great deal of sympathy with the boys and girls who have only one talent. It is hard not to be an all-round clever person; it is most discouraging

to be always adorning the foot of the class. But there is no reason why you should not make a brilliant success of life all the same. Yes, I said brilliant, and I mean brilliant. You can polish up that one talent of yours—and everybody has at least one talent—till it shines for all to see.

I wonder what your special talent is! Do you know it? You are not clever at grammar and history and geography, but you have a knack of getting your sums right every time, or you can read music as easily as other people read the ABC, or you can draw any given thing, or you can sing like a bird. Very well, work up these subjects till you excel in them.

Perhaps you aren't good at even arithmetic or music. But mother knows that, when you like, you can be a splendid help at home. You can cook or you can sew, or you can run errands, or you can tidy and dust and make the home comfortable and happy. Very good. Excel there.

We might go on all day just naming the talents one can have.

There is a certain famous London doctor of whom a man who was a class-fellow at the university said: "He was not what could be called a genius by any means. I should not even say he was clever. He was a *one talent* chap; and his talent was being able to put his bits of information in their proper place. He was methodical to a degree. Some of us have a lot to answer for. We might have done better. Give my

old class-fellow an idea that was worth anything, and didn't he work at it!"

That man made the most of his talent for methodical work, and you see what he has come to. But I'll tell you a much more wonderful story.

You must all have heard of the American girl called Helen Keller. She is blind and deaf, and as a little girl she was very unhappy. She could understand nothing, not even what having a mother meant. But a wonderful teacher was sent to her, and through this teacher Helen learned about the world she could not see, about love and about God. And now she is helping people who *can* see by telling them in books her beautiful thoughts. She is using the talent God gave her—her wonderful mind—and she is using it for others.

And that brings me to the last thing I want to say to the one talent people. It is this. Use your talent for others; don't polish it up merely for your own use. Polish it so that the world may be the brighter and happier for its shining. If you use it only for yourself, you won't be doing much better than the servant who buried his talent in a field. The lord and master expected the servant to use the talent for him, and God expects us to use for Him the gifts He gives us. And the best way—the only way—to use them for Him is to use them for other people. Have you got the idea? To come down to everyday things. If you are good at sums help that little fellow who can't get

his right. If you are good at sewing don't just make dainty decorations for yourself, give mother a hand with the darning.

Boys and girls, these are trifles—trifles, did I say? In God's sight there are no such things as trifles.

INASMUCH.

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.—Matt. xxv. 40 (AV).

HAVE you ever heard the story of the Fourth Wise Man? You have all heard of the Three Wise Men who came from the East to lay their gifts before the Babe in Bethlehem. Dr. Henry van Dyke tells us the story of the Other Wise Man, who arrived too late.

His name was Artaban, and he lived far away in a city among the mountains of Persia. Like the other Wise Men he had studied the stars and the ancient prophecies. He knew that a great King would arise in Israel who would make life everlasting, and that His birth would be heralded by a star. He knew that the time had come when this King should appear on the earth, and he had arranged with his friends—the other Wise Men—that, when the star appeared, they should wait for him ten days at the Temple at Borsippa in Babylonia, and that they should then set out together for Jerusalem to worship the great King.

Artaban had sold his beautiful house and all that he possessed to buy three magnificent jewels for the King. One was a sapphire, "blue as a fragment of the night sky," the second a ruby, "redder than a ray of

sunrise," the third a pearl, "pure as the peak of a snow mountain at twilight."

One night Artaban saw the star in the East and he set out immediately on his steed Vasda to join his companions at Borsippa. It was a long journey across plains, and through fertile valleys, and over bare mountain passes; but he knew that by rising very early in the morning and riding late into the night he could just manage to accomplish it in time.

On the evening of the tenth day Artaban found himself only three hours distant from Borsippa. Vasda was nearly exhausted, but the journey was almost completed and his friends would wait till midnight. As he was passing through a grove of date palms his horse suddenly hesitated and stopped. A dark object lay in the shadow of the last palm tree, and the Wise Man on dismounting discovered a poor sick Hebrew who had been overcome by marsh fever.

And now a terrible struggle took place within the traveller's breast. He knew that if he stopped to attend to the sick man he would be too late to join his companions. They would conclude that he had given up the quest and go on without him. On the other hand, if he left the Hebrew lying helpless there he would certainly die. It was but for a moment that he hesitated. Then he knelt down beside the sick man and did all in his power to relieve his sufferings. He moistened his lips and his brow and gave him medicine out of a phial which he carried in his girdle. All night long he stayed beside him and tended him,

and in the morning the Hebrew was so far restored as to be able to sit up and look about him. When Artaban saw that the man was well enough to take care of himself, he laid beside him all the bread and wine that he had, and told him to go to Babylon when his strength was sufficiently restored. Then mounting Vasda he rode on towards Borsippa. But alas, when he reached the Temple he found it was as he had feared. His friends had gone forward without him.

Without money and without food Artaban could not hope to cross the desert alone. He must return to Babylon to buy provisions and a train of camels. And to do this he must sell one of his precious jewels. Very reluctantly he parted with the sapphire, but he consoled himself with the thought that he had yet two gems to offer to the King.

All this caused delay, and when at last Artaban reached Bethlehem he found that his companions had come and gone three days before. But he discovered something still sadder; for he was told that that same night Joseph of Nazareth had taken his wife and child away secretly, and it was whispered they were going to Egypt. The village was in an uproar, for an order had gone forth from Herod that all the children under two years of age should be slain, and Artaban gave his precious ruby to a soldier to save the life of a baby whose mother had shown him kindness.

The Wise Man had now only one jewel left—the beautiful pearl—and his quest was still unfulfilled.

He was very sad as he thought how he had spent for the sake of man that which was meant for God, but still he did not give up the search.

He followed the young King down into Egypt, and long and patiently he sought for Him; but all in vain. Now and again he came to a place where He had sojourned some time before, but the Child Himself he never found. At length a wise old Hebrew told him that the Messiah must be sought for not among the great and wealthy but among the poor and lowly, the sorrowful and the oppressed. So the other Wise Man visited the sick and the poor, the sad and the imprisoned. He fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and healed the sick, and comforted the captive, but the Babe who was born in Bethlehem he did not find.

And so the years sped on. Artaban's hair turned from black to silver, and from silver to snowy-white. His back grew bent, and his step became feeble. At length, thirty-three years after he had first set out, he came again to Jerusalem. It was the season of the Passover, but the city was in a state of great excitement, for two famous robbers were about to be crucified, and, between them, Jesus of Nazareth who had called Himself the "King of the Jews." Hoping, and yet fearing, that this might indeed be the King whom he had sought half a lifetime, Artaban joined the crowd who were pressing on towards one of the city gates beyond which stood the hill where the men were to be put to death. Just outside he met a band

of soldiers who were carrying away a young girl as a slave. And the girl, seeing Artaban's kind face, cried out to him to save her.

Then the Wise Man took out his last precious gift. Never had it looked so lovely, so worthy of the King he had hoped to find. Must he indeed part with it? Then he would have no gift left, and must give up his quest for ever. And yet he could not do otherwise. Trembling, he laid the gem in the hand of the slave that she might buy back her freedom. And even as he did so the ground shook with a mighty earthquake, the houses tottered, and a tile from a roof struck the old man a mortal blow on the forehead.

As he lay dying in the arms of the girl he had rescued, a voice came through the twilight very small and still, and Artaban spoke as if in answer, "Not so, my Lord: For when saw I thee an hungred and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw I thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? When saw I thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? Three-and-thirty years have I looked for thee; but I have never seen thy face, nor ministered to thee, my King."

And the voice replied, "Verily I say unto thee, Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me."

Then with one long last breath, Artaban's journey ended. His gifts were accepted. He had found the King.

Boys and girls, can you guess why I have told you this beautiful story? It is because it explains far better than twenty sermons could the meaning of those words of Jesus, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

We shall one day be judged, not by the amount of fame or wealth which we have gathered on this earth, but by the little kindly acts of love and service which we have done, or left undone, from day to day.

Jesus Christ came down to earth so that He might share our joys and our sorrows, so that He might suffer our pains, so that He might die the death of a man. And He did all this because He loved us so dearly, and because, by suffering Himself, He could know best how to comfort and help us.

And Jesus cares so much for all His children that when they are hungry, He is hungry, when they are sad, He is sad; and all who help or comfort His suffering ones, help and comfort Him.

If you saw Jesus tired and hungry, wouldn't you run to help Him? Wouldn't you rejoice if He came to rest in your house? Wouldn't you be glad to give Him food and drink? Then remember that when you see a little sick child, Jesus is suffering in that child, when you see your mother tired with her day's toil, Jesus is weary too, when you meet a ragged, pinched boy on the streets, Jesus is cold and hungry. Don't turn away from them with an unsympathetic heart, for then you will be earning Christ's rebuke, "Inasmuch as ye

did it not." But do what you can to help, and then you will indeed be helping Jesus, and you will one day receive His glad welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

EXCHANGES.

What are ye willing to give me?—Matt. xxvi. 15.

I WANT to speak this morning about some of the bargains we make. You know in some ways life is just like a big market. We are always exchanging one thing for another, and it is very important that we should make good exchanges.

We are not very old before we begin to bargain. There are the exchanges we make at school. Every boy knows about them. You have an old pen-knife that the other boy has taken a fancy to and that you could do without; but before you part with it you ask him, "What are you willing to give me for it?" And if he doesn't make a good offer, the chances are you keep it to yourself. Of course, if you are a wise boy, you see to it that you are getting back as good a thing as you are giving; and if you are a straight boy you see that you are giving as good as you are getting. It's a shabby sort of trick to palm off rubbish on anyone for something of real worth.

It was very much in this way that trade began long, long ago. From far across the desert men travelled with their camels and they exchanged the things which one country produced for those which another yielded.

Perhaps they brought spices or rare woods and took back gold or precious stones, and so what one needed and did not possess the other supplied.

And that was how the trade of Britain began too. The Romans came to us and they saw that we had a large supply of tin that we could not use and many skins of wild animals that we did not require, and they said, "We will take these things from you." And the Britons asked, "What are you willing to give us for them?" Then the Romans showed them pieces of beautiful finely-woven cloth, and the Britons said, "We will take those, for we are not able to make them, and you may have our skins and our tin."

And it is the same to-day. Our great ships carry far over the seas our iron and steel goods and our manufactures of cotton and wool and linen, and they bring back raw material—gold and silver and copper ore, wool and flax and hides, and hundreds of other things that we can't grow here.

But those are not the only things that people exchange. There are all sorts of wise and foolish exchanges going on unseen every day, and I want you to think of some of the things that are going about asking us what we will give in order to possess them.

First Pleasure comes along and says, "What are you willing to give me?" And some people reply, "I will give you all my time," and others, "all my money," and others, "all my health," and others, "all myself." But if you are sensible you say, "No, you are a very

good thing in your own place, and we could not get on very well without some of you, but a little goes a long way and we are not going to give up everything for you."

Then Money arrives and asks, "What are you willing to give me?" And some people say, "For your sake I will give up generosity, or honesty, or my peace of conscience." But those who are wise reply, "It is a bad bargain. For these are things we value above anything that money can buy."

Ambition comes next and asks, "What are you willing to give me?" And there are some who answer, "I will give you all my better feelings; I will cut out my heart and you shall have it if you replace it with a stone." But those who are thoughtful reply, "The sacrifice is too great. A right ambition is a good thing in its place, but to give up everything for ambition is a poor exchange."

Then Honour comes along and says, "What are you willing to give me?" And those who are wise and brave reply, "I will give you even life itself if need be," for they know that there are things of more value than life.

There are many other things in life which demand something for their possession, but what of the things that are given us freely, and for which we ought in honour to make some return?

Every day your parents are giving you food, and clothing, and care, and love. Many a weary night

your mother has watched over you when you were sick, or given up her own sleep to hush you to rest when you were fretful. Many a long day your father has toiled till his limbs ached or his brain was weary that you might have food and clothing and a roof to cover you. They do not ask money from you in return, for they know that you have none to give, and they do it all for love of you; but what are you willing to give them? The only gifts worth offering are obedience and reverence and, above all, love.

And God has given us freely of His best. He has given us home and friends and books, the beauty of the world and the glory of the sky. Above all He has given His only Son for us because He loves us with an everlasting love. What are we willing to give Him? There is only one thing that can satisfy Him. It is only love that can repay love. And He longs for our love although it is such a poor, feeble thing.

There is just one thing more I want to say. You know that the words of our text were spoken by Judas Iscariot when he bargained with the chief priests to sell Christ for the price of a slave. Never try to take anything in exchange for Christ. Some people give Christ up for pleasure, and some for money, and some for fame, and some for ease. If you do that you will find that you have concluded the worst bargain you ever made.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE KINGDOM.

Thy speech bewrayeth thee.—Matt. xxvi. 73.

MANY years ago a young girl went from Aberdeenshire to London to get music lessons from a famous master. She was eager over her work, but inclined to feel lonely. One Sunday evening some friends took her to Union Chapel, Islington. There came into the pulpit the late Dr. George MacDonald, the novelist and preacher. His voice came to her like a breath of air from her native hills, for although a learned man and a poet, he spoke with an accent that is easily recognized in any part of the world. His was the voice of a man who came from the north-west of Aberdeenshire.

His speech betrayed him.

Peter came from the highlands of Palestine; he was a "highlander." When did you ever meet a highlander who could leave his accent behind him? Peter could never hide anything. He could hide neither his joy, nor his sorrow, nor his anger; least of all could he hide his native accent.

Everywhere men are betrayed by their speech. Even to old age, some little trick of tongue acquired

in childhood reveals them. You can tell, too, whether your companions are happy or miserable by the way they speak, can't you? It is so with nearly every living thing. On bright summer mornings, you know that the birds are happy. They sing as if they wanted all the world to know of their happiness. And have you ever had to listen to the cry of a bird who had had its nest plundered? Poor little sorrowful singer!

Near my home is an open space where children come to play. There are a great number of stones which have been carted and left there by some builder. The children play at building houses. As a rule, they are very happy. But sometimes they quarrel. Their loud voices tell me. The passers-by, too, know what the sounds mean; and they think—"what a pity!" You boys and girls know the playground better than I do. One boy is angry—you can tell by his voice at once; another wants to rule, and he shouts with all his might because his comrades will not listen. An observant person would get a very fair idea of the general tone of your school simply by listening during the play-hour. Even your school has its language.

The Kingdom of Heaven has a language all its own. What is it like? We know what it is like because Jesus spoke it when He was on earth. He was gentle, He was lowly. He loved others better than Himself. He spoke the language not only in words but in deeds. And deeds often speak louder than words. There is a clever saying—I wonder if you know it? "I cannot

hear what you say, what you are speaks so loud." That just means that our deeds tell even more truly than our words what is in our hearts. There is another wise old saying, "What is nearest the heart comes soonest out," so if our hearts are pure and true and brave and loving, then our words and our actions will be pure and true and brave and loving too. Heart and words and deeds will all speak the language that Christ spoke—the language of the Kingdom.

How shall we get the kind of heart that will make it easy for us to speak the language of the Kingdom? Well, you all know that if you admire anyone very much and are much in his company you unconsciously imitate him. You can't help wanting to be like that person and so, almost without knowing it, you copy him. That is just the way to learn the language of the Kingdom. Get to really know and love Christ. The rest will be easy, much easier than learning French, or Latin, or Greek, or any other language. There will be no verbs to construe, no nouns to decline, no syntax to grind. And there is only one rule to learn. It governs everything. It is the golden rule called Love.

THE STORY OF A ROMAN LADY.

And while he [Pilate] was sitting on the judgement-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.—Matt. xxvii. 19.

I WONDER if you ever feel unhappy with the sort of unhappiness that you know your fathers and mothers can do nothing to remove. I have known a big boy rise out of bed in the night, and go into his mother's room; when she asked him what was the matter, he said, "I don't know, mother: something was on my mind and I couldn't sleep. It's very hard to understand things, mother." I believe you could all tell stories about being unhappy in the night.

How is it so? We sing a little hymn in the Sunday School—

> God is always near me:
> In the darkest night
> He can see me just the same
> As by mid-day light.

Why should you sometimes feel God nearer you during the night than through the day? Well, for one thing, in the night there is silence. You feel you are quite alone, even when someone is sleeping beside

you; sometimes you even think that you hear God speak. But He was just as near you in the day-time; and He spoke then, only you were busy—too busy to listen to what He said. In the silence of the night He compels attention.

Every man and woman has heard God's voice at some time in his or her life. It may have been in a little cottage, in a city top flat, or in a palace.

This morning I want to talk to you about a Roman lady who heard God's voice in a palace. It was long, long ago. She was the wife of Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judæa, and one would have thought that she had everything to make her happy. Pilate, her husband, loved her. We know that because a Roman governor might take his wife to his province only if he made a strong personal appeal that she should be allowed to go. And she loved him. But there was an element of sadness in her love. The man whom as a young girl she had revered and loved had changed. They had once talked of great thoughts to each other. In those days they had both had high ideals; but as time passed this lady saw her husband yield to the opinions of the people who were in power; she noticed his character becoming less noble, she saw him at last a coward, surrendering to the cry of "Barabbas!" from a street mob, and delivering Christ to be crucified.

We can imagine her listening with a hungry interest to one of her maids as she talked of the wonderful Prophet of Nazareth who had been going about the

city saying beautiful and fascinating things about a Kingdom in which only those who had pure hearts would have a place. The idea made her think, and think, and want to know more; she even looked from her window with envy at the humble women of Jerusalem who followed Jesus.

In the Bible Pilate's wife appears in but one sentence. But that sentence tells the whole tragic story. When her husband was set down on the judgment-seat, she sent to him saying: "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Her thoughts had dwelt so much on the wonderful Man whom she had seen, and of whom she had heard, that He was in her dreams by night.

It is a sad story, but in its sadness there is something like a ray of light. Pilate's wife must have been deeply in earnest when she sent the warning to her husband, for she could have been punished for doing it. To send a message to a judge, while he sat upon the seat of judgment, with the idea of trying to make him change his mind was a punishable offence. But she knew no fear; she saw the life of Jesus Christ in the hands of cruel and dishonourable men. It has been said that she died a believer in Him, and we can believe that it is true.

What would have made Pilate's wife happy in her palace, do you think? To get near to Jesus, to hear Him speak. Had she been able to visit the little

home in Bethany, I feel sure she would have envied it, as many a queen has envied a humble cottage. Had she been in the Upper Room and seen Jesus Christ wash His disciples' feet, had she followed Him as He bore His cross, nothing would have kept her back from joining the weeping women of Jerusalem.

We preach about this same Jesus now. You boys and girls may still hear Him speak. He is more than merely a "righteous man" to us, for He came to earth to die for us. If this story makes Him seem "living" to you, don't forget it. Pray to-night that you, who know so much more about Him than this Roman lady, may be made one of His devoted servants.

"LET BE."

And the rest said, Let be.—Matt. xxvii. 49.

THESE were the words with which the mob round the cross greeted the only man who tried to help Jesus in His agony.

Christ had called out in the language of that country, "Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani," which means, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" But the people fancied He was calling, not on God, but on Elijah. They had a tradition that Elijah would some day return, and they expected to see him in bodily form. So when a kind-hearted man among them ran and dipped a sponge in sour wine and gave it to Christ to ease the pain and thirst, they told him not to interfere. "Let be," they said; "let us see whether Elijah cometh to save him." Perhaps they were really curious to see whether Elijah would come; perhaps the words were just a taunt. That makes little difference. What matters is that these people did not really care. They just let things take their course and did not put out a finger to help. They might not have been able to take Christ down off the cross but they might have done something to ease His

pain. Instead of that they rebuked the only man among them who had some pity left in him: "Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to save him."

There are few things that do more harm than those two words—"Let be." Some people think that so long as they don't tell lies, or steal, or do anything actually bad, they are all right. But you know there are two ways of being wicked—there is the way of *doing*, and there is the way of *not doing* or "letting be"; and perhaps the second way does more harm than the first.

I wonder if you dislike the word "naughty" as much as I do? I used to have a great objection to it when I was small. Whenever I did anything that wasn't right, I was told I was "naughty." I used to think I'd rather be downright wicked than "naughty." Since I have come to know the real meaning of the word, I have disliked it even more. For do you know what naughtiness means? "Naught" is just another word for "nothing," so "naughtiness" is "nothingness." Would you like to be called a cipher, a big round "O"? I should hate it. The naughty people, you see, are really the people who do nothing in the world, who just "let things be."

What sort of things do people "let be"? Well, sometimes they let *duties* be. There is something they ought to do, but it is irksome, and so they don't do it. They just avoid doing it, and by and by they find they

have got themselves and their friends into a terrible muddle.

And then again people let *suffering and wrong* be. Boys often let their weaker comrades be bullied because they are afraid of their own popularity. And sometimes people allow suffering to go on because it would trouble them too much to stop it.

There was a small boy once who was walking along a country road, and he saw lying in the corner of a field a sheep which seemed to be very ill. He stood looking at it for a while, feeling very sorry for it; then he turned and went home for dinner. But he couldn't help thinking about that sheep, and that afternoon he went off to have another look at it. It was lying in the same spot and seemed to be worse, and the thought struck him that perhaps the owner knew nothing about it. He went to the nearest farm and asked the farmer if the sheep belonged to him. He was told that the flock was owned by a man who lived nearly two miles away. Nothing daunted, he set out for this other farm and interviewed the farmer, who was very much obliged for the information.

The boy was late for tea and missed a game of cricket, and when the story leaked out his big brother laughed him to scorn. "What was the use of your poking your nose into other people's affairs and losing your game? I've no doubt the farmer knew all about his precious sheep and was highly tickled at your interference. I'm jolly sure I shouldn't have bothered my head about it!" That big brother was one of the

"let be" people, one of the "ciphers"; and I'm "jolly" glad *he* didn't find the sheep.

Lastly, people let *Christ* be. It is not only those who nail Christ to the cross that do Him hurt. It is the people who leave Him alone, who "let Him be." If we are not taking our place with Christ, then we are siding with His enemies though we may not think so, or like to think so. It was for our sakes that He suffered on Calvary—for yours and mine; and the very least thing we can do is to give our lives to His service. Don't be a "cipher," don't be a "nothing," don't be a "let be" person. Take your stand firmly on Christ's side, and you will never regret it.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01102 1567

Date Due

Ag 4 -
DE 1948
SE 3 '53
FACULTY
FACULTY
JUN 2